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Student Engagement in Undergraduate Social Work Education Among "at-risk" Students

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Student Engagement in Undergraduate Social Work Education Among "at-risk" Students

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Table of Contents

List of Tables ..... **vii**

List of Figures ..... **viii**

List of Appendices ..... **ix**

Abstract ..... **x**

Chapter 1 ..... **1**

- **Introduction** **1**
  - **Statement of the Problem** **2**
- **Significance for Social Work** **3**
- **Purpose of the Study** **5**

Chapter 2 ..... **6**

- **Student Engagement** **6**
  - **Review of the Literature & Definition** **6**
- **Types of Student Engagement** **10**
  - **Peer to peer** **10**
  - **Student Engagement with Faculty** **12**
  - **Academic Advising** **13**
  - **Student Engagement with Profession** **14**
  - **Student Engagement with University** **15**
- **At-Risk Students** **17**
  - **Definition** **17**
  - **First Generation College Students** **17**
  - **Transfer Students** **19**
  - **Military Students** **21**
- **Social Work Education** **22**
- **Review of Empirical Findings** **23**
- **Theory** **26**
  - **General System Theory** **27**

Social Capital Theory **30**
Chapter 3 ..... **37**
Methodology **37**
NSSE Survey and Data Collection Procedure **37**
NSSE Survey **37**
NSSE Procedure **38**
Sample **41**
Measures **42**
NSSE Indicators **43**
At-risk Measures **45**
Data Analysis **52**
Human Subjects Research Protection **53**
Chapter 4 ..... **53**
Results **53**
Description of Sample **53**
Missing Data Analysis and Prescreening **54**
Sample Characteristics **55**
At-risk Student **56**
Dependent Variables **58**
Instrumentation Reliability **58**
Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion **59**
Peer to Peer Engagement Scale **60**
Student Engagement with Faculty Scale **61**
Student Engagement with University **63**
Student Engagement with Profession **64**
Question One: Relationship among the Dependent Variables **65**
Question Two: Relationship between At-Risk Groups and Student Engagement **66**
Engagement Differences among At-Risk Students **72**
First Generation College Students **72**
Transfer Students **74**

Military Students **75**
Multivariate **75**
Chapter Five **77**
Discussion **77**
Study Overview **77**
Discussion of Findings **78**
Conceptualizing Student Engagement **78**
Answering the Study Questions **80**
Question One: Student Engagement Relationships **81**
Question Two: At-risk Students and Engagement **82**
Refining the definition of First Generation College Students **82**
Demographics and At-risk student groups **83**
Transfer Students **84**
At-risk Students and Engagement Types **85**
Hypothesis A **85**
Hypothesis B **87**
Hypothesis C **88**
Question Three: Group Membership and Engagement **88**
Methodological Limitations **89**
Research and Practice Implications **92**
Research Implications **92**
Practice Implications **93**
Suggestions for future research **97**
Conclusion **99**
References **102**
Appendices **115**
Vita **154**

List of Tables

Table 3.1: First Generation College Students, Defined 46

Table 3.2: Study measures 48

Table 4.1: Sample Demographics 55

Table 4.2: At Risk Student Populations 57

Table 4.3: Reliability Coefficients of Dependent Variables: Cronbach's alpha 59

Table 4.4: Univariate Statistics for Measures of Dependent Variables 60

Table 4.5: Correlation Matrix Between all Dependent Variables 66

Table 4.6: Relationship between demographic and at risk student students-Pearson Chi Square test 68

Table 4.7: Relationship between demographics and four dependent variables-independent samples t-test 70

Table 4.8: FGCS Narrow Definition independent t-test 73

Table 4.9: FGCS Expanded Definition independent t-test 74

Table 4.10: Transfer Student Engagement Comparison t-test 75

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Figure 2.1. Overview of study variables and relationships to be examined..... 36

Figure 3.1: 2011 NSSE Summary Recruitment Method 40

Figure 4.1: Peer to Peer Engagement Histogram 61

Figure 4.2: Student with Faculty Engagement histogram 62

Figure 4.3: Student with University Engagement histogram..... 63

Figure 4.4: Student Engagement with Profession histogram..... 64

List of Appendices

Appendix A: National Center for Educational Statistics; Fast Facts 115

Appendix B: National Survey of Student Engagement (2011) 116

Appendix C: Measurement Scales, Component Items, and Intercorrelation Tables (NSSE 2011 Data) 144

Appendix D: NSSE 2011 U.S. Response Rate Information by Key Institutional Characteristics..... 153

Abstract

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN UNDERGRADUATE SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AMONG "AT-RISK" STUDENTS

By Ananda Newmark, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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College student engagement is an important factor that contributes to student success. This study is one of the first to explore student engagement in undergraduate social work education by examining engagement levels among at-risk social work students. In this study, two types of at-risk student groups were studied: First Generation College Students (FGCS) and transfer students. A cross sectional research design was used. Secondary analysis was performed on data gathered by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) from five accredited, Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programs in one southeast state. A sample of 135 BSW seniors

were included in this study and their levels of engagement were measured using four engagement types (peer to peer, student with faculty, student with university, and student with profession). Univariate and bivariate statistical procedures were used to examine the data and describe the sample. Hierarchical and logistic regression were used to test whether membership in an at-risk group could predict student engagement. There was a moderate to strong relationship between the four types of student engagement. Together, they indicated a good measure of BSW student engagement. FGCS had statistically significant lower levels of student engagement in three out of the four engagement types (peer to peer, student with faculty, and student with profession) than their non-FGCS counterparts. Practice implications for BSW programs to address low student engagement for FGCS through specific programming were provided. Transfer students had no statistically significant differences in any of the four types of student engagement compared to their non-transfer counterparts. Two explanations were posited for these findings; that social work programs are small in size and facilitate targeted student engagement that act as engagement "protective factors" and, by the time transfer students completed this survey they had already adopted the academic and cultural expectations requisite for success. Lastly, membership in an at-risk group, specifically FGCS, may predict lower levels of engagement in certain engagement types. The overall findings identify areas of low student engagement which afford BSW programs opportunities to create tailored programming to address it, especially among FGCS. Suggestions for future studies are also discussed.

Chapter 1

Introduction

"Lost in the shuffle" describes the way some students feel when entering college as freshmen or as transfer students from other post-secondary institutions. In particular, transfer students, some from small four year universities and many from two year community colleges, face challenges such as large class sizes, establishing meaningful and integrative relationships in a new environment, and navigating through a large network of university resources. Other students may be the first in their family to attend college, what many scholars reference in the literature as "first generation college students" (Bulger & Watson, 2006; Forbus, Newbold, & Mehta, 2011; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, Terenzini, (2004); Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Soria & Stebleton, 2012). For many of these students, the risk of failure is greater than for students who enter college with better academic preparation and/or those with college educated family members who serve as role models and provide various supports (Engle, 2007). Students who do not successfully persist from one year to the next (ie: from freshman to sophomore, sophomore to junior, etc…), do not meet minimum grade performance expectations, do not meet measured length of time to degree completion, or do not graduate at all are considered as failures (Engle, 2007). These students may be considered vulnerable or at-risk because of the severe consequences associated with college failure.

Students and colleges/universities anticipate successful college experiences. According to National Center for Educational Statistics (2015)[1], "...about 59 percent of students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year institution in fall 2007 completed that degree within 6 years. The graduation rate for females (62 percent) was higher than the rate for males (56

percent)" ("Institutional Retention and Graduation Rates," para. 1). These data reflect percentages of first-time, full-time undergraduates retained at 4-year degree-granting institutions in the 2012-2013 academic year. The remaining 38%-44% did not graduate within six years and many will never graduate, leaving students without a college degree and often heavy student loan debt associated with the cost of attending college.

> For the 2012–13 academic year, annual current dollar prices for undergraduate tuition, room, and board were estimated to be $15,022 at public institutions, $39,173 at private nonprofit institutions, and $23,158 at private for-profit institutions. Between 2002–03 and 2012–13, prices for undergraduate tuition, room, and board at public institutions rose 39 percent, and prices at private nonprofit institutions rose 27 percent, after adjustment for inflation" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015, Response, para. 1)[c] (See Appendix A).

With the average US college graduation rate hovering around 59%, colleges and universities seek ways to help students avoid for some, what becomes a lifelong struggle to pay back student loan debt that has no return on investment.

Statement of the Problem

Students enter social work degree programs to acquire essential skill sets that provide a foundation from which to positively impact the lives of others. The purpose of social work education is to prepare students to become competent, ethical, professional practitioners and policy makers (CSWE, 2008). As such, social work education is complex and challenging; unfortunately, not all students complete their social work degree. Some social work students fail to meet the minimum academic requirements set forth by the program/university and may be "at-risk" for premature departure from college without a degree which in turn, limits student's professional employment opportunities, (Kuh, Kinzie, Bridges, & Hayek, 2007).

Individuals without a social work degree may be severely hindered in their ability to positively impact the lives of others in positions labeled “social work”. In today’s overall social services job market, possessing an undergraduate degree is imperative for professional employment. "In the human capital economy that dominates the world, honesty and hard work are no longer sufficient for success; individual and social welfare are increasingly determined by formal education for men and women, for all racial and ethnic groups, in every corner of the country" (Mortenson, 2000, p. 38). Furthermore, social work students who fail to persist or graduate face even harder challenges working in the social work field. In many states, “title protection” laws are in place to ensure that those who hold positions with the words “social work” in their job title must possess a minimum four year degree in social work from an accredited institution; ultimately ensuring that services rendered, stem from and are influenced by the values associated with our profession’s ethics and standards. By understanding how social work students experience and engage in their undergraduate social work education, in particular those labeled “at-risk”, colleges and universities who have undergraduate social work programs can create and provide more effective programming to ensure that students will have access to necessary supports to further their persistence to become successful college graduates.

Significance for Social Work

The consequences and impact of student failure is felt by students, institutions, and future client populations. When social work students fail to persist or drop out of school for academic or financial reasons, not only do they lack a formal college degree, but many are left with a debt that they are unable to repay. This leaves many individuals underemployed with little to no economic security and often in financial crisis.

Another consequence of school failure is associated with loss to the social work profession. With a projected employment growth in the social work field to increase by 19% by the year 2020, the profession is in need of qualified individuals, those with a minimum four year degree in social work from an accredited school, to work in all areas of social welfare (United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). For most who are interested in a direct helping profession, social work may be an ideal fit. Not all students find social work to be a good fit. However, for every student who feels social work is a good fit and fails to graduate, it is a loss to the profession.

Unfortunately, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the body that accredits all schools of social work at the bachelors and masters level, provides no national databases that track persistence or graduation rates for schools of social work. Thus, it is challenging to paint a national picture of four and six year undergraduate graduation rates among Bachelor of Social Work programs.

We do know however something about the extent of the need for social work professionals. In 2012, over 607,000 social workers were employed in a variety of settings with diverse client populations. By 2020, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) projects the field to add an additional 114,100 jobs in the various areas of social welfare. These social work positions exist in the following areas: child welfare (school social workers, family services social workers, child protective service workers, or occupational social workers), medical and public health (hospital social workers, individual and family service social workers, or social workers in nursing and personal care facilities), mental health and substance abuse (substance abuse social workers, mental health therapists/counselors, or social work positions in the correctional

systems) (United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). In order to meet the increasing need for qualified social work professionals, colleges and universities have a responsibility to examine areas of student support (in explicit and implicit ways) to increase persistence and improve overall social work graduation rates.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of this study is to gain a better understanding of student engagement among "at-risk" BSW students in comparison to their non-at-risk counterparts from five southeast universities by exploring relationships between student demographics (sex, race/ethnicity, class level, enrollment status, FGCS status, transfer status, and military status) and the types of student engagement: peer to peer, student with faculty, student with university, & student with profession among 'at risk' student populations.

Chapter Two and Three will present the framework and outline for this study. Chapter Two will provide definitions of student engagement and "at-risk students", the various forms of student engagement and theories that provide the foundation for the study's methodical structure. Chapter Three will discuss the survey and data collection methods used in this study in addition to the identified sample population, measures, and data analysis procedures. Chapter Four will report the findings of the statistical analysis of the data and Chapter Five will answer the study questions in addition to a discussion about the methodological limitations of this study, implications for future practice and research, and a conclusion.

Chapter 2

Student Engagement

Chapter Two describes and defines student engagement as it is referenced in the literature, identifies and defines the four domains of student engagement, provides a definition of "at-risk students" and identifies the three at-risk student populations that were used in this study. Two theories that informed this dissertation are presented. Lastly, the Chapter ends with a conceptual model and study research questions.

Review of the Literature & Definition

Scholars who write about "student success" (Kuh, Kinzie, Bridges, & Hayek, 2007; Pascarella, Pierson, & Wolniak, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2004; Yezedjian, Toews, Sevin, & Purswell, 2008) utilize a variety of terms and definitions. Most often, "student success" focuses on "academic success" as measured by grade performance, persistence of students transitioning from freshman status into their sophomore year, the overall length of time to attain a degree, and, lastly, graduation (Kuh, Kinzie, Bridges, & Hayek, 2007; Becker et al, 2009; Brown & Burdsal, 2012; Daley & Sidell, 2013; Dika, 2012; and Griswold, 2014). While academic success is a central element of "student success", a growing literature argues for attention to factors that are critical to understanding "student success" (Bulger & Watson, 2006; Campbell & Nutt, 2008; McCarthy & Kuh, 2006; Sayles & Shelton, 2005). One of the most important factors is student engagement.

Wolf-Wendel, et al (2009) summarize:

> … high levels of student engagement are associated with a wide range of educational practices and conditions, including purposeful student-faculty contact, and active collaborative learning. Engagement is also associated with institutional environments that are perceived by students as inclusive and affirming, and where expectations for performance are clearly communicated and set at reasonably high levels (p. 413).

Student engagement is referenced throughout post-secondary educational literature in a variety of ways. For example, "engagement" has been used to describe engaged student learning, cognitive student engagement, student/community engagement, and activities associated with peer/faculty interaction. Nevertheless, much of the scholarly literature related to student engagement (Hatch, 2012; Pascarella, & Terenzini 2005; Wolf-Wendal, Ward, & Kinzie 2009; Zhao & Kuh, 2004) points to and references Kuh's (2001, 2003, 2009) definition of student engagement: "...the amount of time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities" (Kuh, 2009[1], p.683). This definition, which is used throughout this dissertation, implies that student engagement is an integral component of the "college experience" that is both student and institutionally based.

Kuh (2001) and Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) suggest that a quality undergraduate education is made up of engaged students; students who engage in their classes, with their peers, faculty, institutional entities, as well as with discipline specific professional organizations (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). More recently, student engagement in communities, through 'service learning', has afforded students opportunities to participate in collaborations between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources (Driscoll, 2014).

The emergence of the concept of student engagement can be traced to the work of Robert Pace who developed the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) in 1979 to identify the activities that contributed to various dimensions of student learning and personal development. Pace's research indicated that when students spent more time studying, engaging with their peers and faculty, and successfully connecting what they learned in the classroom to other environments and situations, what he termed "quality of effort", they gained more from their college experiences (Kuh, 2009[1]). These purposefully planned activities contribute to students' learning in environments and situations beyond traditional academics.

Astin (1984) expanded on Pace's popularized "quality of effort" concept with his "theory of involvement" which underscored issues associated with behavioral and psychological elements of student's time on task. Astin, as cited by Milem and Berger (1997), provided five basic postulates to his theory:

> ... (a) involvement means the investment of physical and psychological energy in different objects that range in degree of their specificity, (b) involvement occurs along a continuum, with different students investing different amounts of times, (c) involvement includes quantitative and qualitative components, (d) the amount of student learning and personal development is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of involvement, and (e) the effectiveness of any educational practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase involvement, (p. 387).

These postulates accentuated the importance of student engagement, student achievement, and student persistence on college success vis a vis degree attainment (Kuh, 2009[1]). Building on Pace (1979) and Astin's (1984) research pertaining to "quality of effort" and "theory of involvement", Chickering and Gamson (1987) highlighted aspects of student engagement when they identified 'seven good practices' associated with undergraduate education: "(a) student-faculty contact, (b) active learning, (c) prompt feedback, (d) time on task,

(e) high expectations, (f) respect for diverse learning styles, and (g) cooperation among students" (Kuh, 2009[1], p. 684). Each of the aforementioned practices can include components of student engagement.

In 1999, Kuh (2001) incorporated most of the previous published literature about student engagement (Astin, 1984; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Pace, 1979; Pascarella, 1985; Tinto, 1987) into a measurement instrument, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), to measure student engagement. In sum, Pace's (1979) "quality of effort" concept, Astin's (1984) "theory of involvement", Chickering and Gamson's (1987) 'seven good practices' for "high quality teaching and learning settings", and Kuh's (2001) NSSE, form the cornerstone of the discussions asserting that the more engaged a student is in his or her college experiences the more successful he or she will be, broadly speaking. Kuh's intent on creating the NSSE was to provide accurate data for college institutions to use to improve undergraduate student experiences, to identify and document effective education practices, and to advocate for acceptance of empirically derived conceptions of collegiate quality (Kuh, 2009[2]). As reviewed below, the NSSE data has been used to answer several questions about undergraduate student experiences in a variety of settings. However, there are no empirical studies that examine BSW student engagement using the NSSE data; such studies could provide a solid foundation from which to better understand how social work students engage and how to improve social work student educational experiences.

Types of Student Engagement

Peer to peer

Student engagement occurs in a variety of settings, through various interactions with a wide assortment of peers, faculty and university representatives, in different environments, and in important formal and informal activities. Kuh et al. (2007) noted that various peer to peer engagements are as critical to a student's success as faculty and classroom interactions because they enhance student's feelings of being socially integrated. In particular, personal and academic development that takes place through student's interactions with other students outside of the classroom is a major factor in academic persistence to advance from one semester to the next (Kuh, 2007).

Peer to peer student engagement is characterized by student time and effort devoted to collegial activities as well as what universities do to induce student to student engagement. Student effort may be considered: participation in student government, student organizations, collaborative learning groups in and out of the classroom, and may also be informal social activities like socializing in small groups, going out to eat, or support of each other regarding personal life issues. A growing literature (Frazier & Eighmy 2012; Hatch, 2012; Rocconi, 2011; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008; Zhao & Kuh, 2004) suggests that planned and purposeful opportunities for peer engagement of college students impacts their learning throughout their college experience.

Zhao & Kuh (2004) studied students who participated in peer to peer interaction through some form of learning community; interacting with each other through academic, social and living activities. They found that students who reported these experiences had larger collegiate gains than students who did not participate in learning communities. Curricular, classroom, and

residential "living learning communities" are three examples of institutionally driven initiatives associated with peer to peer student engagement. Curricular learning communities are typically made up of students who take at least two "themed" courses together in their first semester. This type of learning community promotes peer to peer engagement in multiple classes through study groups, sharing of similar interests, ideas, and majors. The classroom learning community employs various learning techniques and activities that are centrally focused in the classroom using discipline-specific pedagogical practices. The third type, residential or "living learning" communities, combine approaches of curricular and classroom learning communities and adds a living component to the community experience. "Living/learning" communities also tie in community service or "service learning" opportunities and other additional out of class engagement opportunities (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Regardless of the type of peer interaction, student's engagement with each other contributes to a sense of community, belonging, shared experiences, and various student supports which have been linked to student persistence and student success (Frazier, & Eighmy, 2012; Rocconi, 2011; Kuh et al., 2008).

Specific to schools of social work, peer to peer engagement may include: academic study groups, social work student associations, peer mentoring programs, social work networking groups, alumni organizations, and other on and off campus student activities. In addition, social work students also engage with each other in classroom settings through activities such as general all-class discussions, role plays, class presentations, small group activities, or collaborative learning projects. While anecdotal evidence suggests that all or some of these types of peer engagement exist in social work programs, there is little to no published social work literature that captures these types of peer to peer engagements as specific components of

student engagement or examines them as important aspects of students' experiences that lead to student success.

Student Engagement with Faculty

Faculty serve as teachers, mentors, & academic advisors. Specifically, Umbach & Wawrynski (2005) found that an important element of social integration is made up of regular interaction and engagement that takes place between faculty and students. Furthermore, Dika (2012) found that the quality of the interactions between faculty and students are better predictors of student learning and performance than are the number of interactions.

A major faculty responsibility in professional disciplines like social work is to help students put into practice what they are learning in the classroom -- practice that incorporates theory, ethics, the complexity of the human condition, and as professional social workers the skill to effectively problem solve and interact with clients, peers, and supervisors . This includes interacting with students in the classroom, providing professional developmental feedback on papers, and discussing ideas that originate from within the classroom but extend outside of the classroom learning environment (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009). One important role social work educators play is to assist students when they "fail". This is important not only when students experience academic failure but also when the outcome of working with clients or client systems in student's field education environment does not come to fruition as anticipated.

According to the Council on Social Work Education (2014), the average BSW program size is approximately 116.6 students. This often equates to small classroom sizes (15-25 students) and small faculty-student ratios. Classes with small faculty-student ratios provide opportunities for meaningful exchanges and interactions between students and faculty that facilitate an interactive and engaged learning environment often found in social work programs.

In addition to student and faculty classroom engagement, it is suspected that there are other meaningful and important engagement activities that occur outside of the classroom and through academic advising that have yet to be empirically explored in social work education.

Academic Advising

Academic advising is a key engagement activity between students and faculty. According to O'Bannon (1972) as cited by Daly & Sidell (2013), academic advising is defined as "... a partnership in which the advisor guides the advisee to increased self- awareness and goal fulfillment" (p. 38). Traditionally, full time faculty have served as academic advisors, according to Levy (1995). This phenomena is changing with the introduction of professional advisors whose sole focus is supporting students through academic advising activities (Ward, 2011). In 1979, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) was established to formalize the important role that advisors played in student success. NACADA's initial approach to academic advising was to utilize a more "prescriptive" model in working with students; helping them choose appropriate majors and assisting them in the selection of courses required by their identified major. NACADA expanded their initial "prescriptive" model of advising to incorporate a "developmentally" engaged model that included elements of teaching, academic and professional modeling, career development, professional trajectories, and personal goal setting utilizing a myriad of institutional and community resources. During this process, advisors and students establish strong connections and professional associations that often support students even after graduation (Daly & Sidell, 2013).

Utilizing NACADA's prescriptive and developmental approaches to academic advising, faculty engage with students in focused ways. In professional programs like social work,

connecting student's learning in the classroom to their emerging professional experiences in their field work is key to assisting social work students formulate their identity and role as future practitioners. Koerin, Harrigan, & Reeves (1990), posited that:

> The transition from student to social worker is a process which social work educators do not control but can facilitate. Although the final phases of the transition occur after students begin employment, educators typically assume responsibility for preparing students to become social workers. However, the responsibilities of faculty should extend beyond curriculum delivery to include specific strategies for assisting the student transition to professional employment (p. 199).

Student Engagement with Profession

Student's learning in professional programs like social work includes not only the traditional classroom environment but also student's dedicated time and effort that takes place in communities and professional social work settings and organizations. Shulman (2005)[1] introduced the term "signature pedagogy" pertaining to specific methods of teaching and learning related to specific professions. This type of teaching approach purposefully engages students in their profession's rudimentary roles pertaining to "... thinking, performing, and acting with integrity" (Wayne, Bogo, & Raskind, 2010, p. 327). According to the Council on Social Work Education (2008), field education has been identified as social work's signature pedagogy and "... is a central form of instruction and learning to socialize students to perform the role of practitioner- connect and integrate theory and practice" (p. 8).

These developing and rudimentary practitioner roles require students to begin the journey of self-awareness or understanding of self within the context of helping others; acknowledging that helping others will include work with populations from diverse backgrounds to include differences in race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. This role of practitioner also includes students' understanding of the values and ethics of the profession while simultaneously

developing and/or refining a personal code of values and ethics that will enable them to practice in an efficacious manner. The pre-professional exposure in field education links student learning to the role that social workers are expected to fulfill in professional practice. The same is true for other professional disciplines such as nursing, education, medicine, the clergy, and law (Shulman, 2005)[2].

When social work students enter the "field internship" or "practicum", their learning takes place in a real world environment, interacting with real clients and situations. According to Wayne, Bogo, & Raskind (2010) this learning is facilitated through a two-step, interwoven process; first, involving student's self-reflection of their field experiences and second, their ability to critically tie in classroom content pertaining to a variety of theoretical underpinnings, conceptual paradigms, and applicable frameworks. This engaged and experiential learning is facilitated by a student's "field instructor" or agency representative who has a social work degree and guides the student's learning. Field instruction is both a highly structured and engaged learning activity and an activity that facilitates enough freedom for students to individualize their learning experiences. By fully engaging in their field setting with clients through professional social workers and agencies that serve targeted populations, social work students are able to acquire knowledge and skills requisite for professional practice. In addition, students are exposed to the important impact that social workers have on the welfare of communities.

Student Engagement with University

There is a clear and expanding notion that universities play a major role in facilitating opportunities for students to engage. Kuh (2009[1]) makes note of the Association of American Colleges and Universities identification of ten "high impact practices" of proactively channeling

student's time and energy in productive ways. These institutionalized practices include "... first-year seminars, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, common intellectual experiences, service learning, diversity experiences, student faculty research, study abroad, internships, and other field placements, and senior capstone experiences" (Kuh, 2009[1], pp.688-689). These efforts are part of the larger university culture in which all university members play a key role. In fact, Kuh (2009[2]) accentuates the important role that representatives or proxies of the university play in promoting these types of activities that occur within programs, schools, and throughout the larger university system. This, in part has, to do with how schools, departments, programs, and administrators set expectational cultures of student engagement, both explicitly and implicitly as new students enter the university and professional disciplines like social work.

As students engage in any of the aforementioned ways, they become involved in activities that reflect many types of learning that universities and programs create to promote social support and academic success. Regardless of where and how students engage in their college experiences, be that with peers, faculty, university, or profession, engagement is an integral component to being successful in college. Given the diversity of study body makeup at various universities, it may be safe to assume that students engage in different ways. Schools of social work strive to have a diverse student body. This builds social work communities able to respond to a range of social problems and diverse client populations. Within this aspired, diverse student body, there are certain groups of students who have come to be identified as "at-risk". As such, it is expected that they might engage in their educational experience in different ways compared to their non "at-risk" counterparts.

At-Risk Students

Definition

"At-risk" is the most pervasive term cited in literature used to describe students who are vulnerable to premature departure from college or who are underperforming in college (Kuh et al., 2007). At-risk students include: students from historically underserved backgrounds, first generation college students (FGCS), transfer students, students with learning disabilities, students with low socioeconomic status, students who experience mental health related challenges, and many serving in the military with unique needs (Bulger & Watson, 2006; Hassan, Jackson, Lindsay, McCabe, & Sanders, 2010; Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Kuh et al., 2007; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Vivian, 2005). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) suggest that although all students benefit from engaging in a variety of educational activities, some students labeled at-risk may benefit more from particular activities.

First Generation College Students

FGCS are among a growing population in American post-secondary education. It is estimated that approximately 30% of all students at U.S. colleges and universities are FGCS (Swecker, Fifolt, & Searby, 2013). While there is not one agreed upon definition of what constitutes a FGCS, much of the scholarly literature on FGCS (Engle, 2007; Forbus, Newbold, & Mehta, 2011; Lundberg, Schreiner, Hovaguimian, & Miller, 2007; Soria & Stebleton, 2012; Swecker, Fifolt, & Searby, 2013) refer to Choy's (2001) classification of FGCS as a college or university student from a family where "...neither of their parents had more than a high school education" (p. xxx). However, Pike & Kuh (2005) provide an alternate definition of FGCS as "…a college or university student from a family where no parent or guardian has earned a

baccalaureate degree" (Pike & Kuh, 2005, p. 277). According to Pascarella et al. (2004), FGCS tend to be enrolled in a part time manner, work part or full time, live off campus, and may have lower levels of academic and social engagement with peers and faculty members than do their full-time counterparts. Engle (2007) and Pascarella et al. (2004) further posited that FGCS often require some type of remedial coursework, have significantly lower grade point averages, and tend be at a disadvantage regarding knowledge about the technicalities and nuances of postsecondary education; e.g., college application processes, academic degree requirements, and financial aid as well as the more tenuous aspects such as study skills, college culture, and time management. Pike & Kuh (2005) refer to this disadvantage as FGCS students lacking the necessary "cultural capital" to navigate these activities in a college environment.

The characteristics associated with FGCS also create significantly larger obstacles for this group of students to actively engage with their peers, faculty, university, and also in their professional experiences. For example, many FGCS live off campus or are working full or part time and do not have the proximity or the time needed for many student engagement opportunities. In addition, the happenstance of being born to parents who do not have a college degree means that FGCS students may not benefit from the important "coaching", role modeling, or ability to share tacit knowledge from parents who share their own college experiences (Kuh et al., 2007). Furthermore, FGCS "... often experience discontinuities between the culture (i.e norms, values, expectations) of their families and communities and the culture that exists on the college campuses, which they often describe as "worlds apart" (Engle, 2007, p. 35). Because many FGCS may not know how best to engage or may not understand some of the 'normative' college engagement activities, between peers, faculty, university, and profession, many FGCS may exhibit less student engagement than their non-FGCS counterparts.

Similar to most freshmen, for many FGCS, entering college is their first experience of autonomy and independence. This independence comes with a charge of managing their newly found freedom with the responsibility to make decisions regarding their academic, social, and financial responsibilities. Yezedjian, Toews, Sevin, & Purswell (2008) posited that students' successful ability to meet their needs for autonomy and independence may be as important as their academic demands regarding to their college experiences. By engaging with peers, faculty, university, and their professional community, students learn to establish important relationships, formulate formal and informal academic supports, understand and address college cultural expectations, create foundational pre-professional identities, and most importantly create a sense of self as they explore their roles as future professional social workers.

Many FGCS begin their academic journeys at community colleges and then transfer into four year schools (Forbus, Newbold, & Mehta, 2011). Those FGCS who enter four year universities, with an interest in majoring in social work, often transfer in with associate degrees in Human Services (HMS) or similar trade programs with an accumulation of credits without an earned associate degree. Because of this, they face additional challenges: extended time to completion, financial aid challenges, school & work/life balance, and fewer connections with classmates, faculty, and program of study (Ishitani, & McKitrick, 2010).

Transfer Students

Transfer students enter new four year institutions with varied academic and social experiences and backgrounds. It is not uncommon for them to face a host of issues that affect their ability to adapt to a new college environment. Not surprisingly, many use their past experiences, both positive and negative in nature, to frame their interactions in a new

environment. For example, some transfer students fail to adhere to programmatic advising expectations, even after it has been communicated as a required engagement activity and a normative college expectation. This in large part, can be due to ineffective or negative advising experiences from their transfer institutions or the absence of these types of collegiate expectations. As a result, many transfer students may be unaware of how to use academic resources, participate in faculty and peer engagement opportunities, or understand the importance of formulating new academic and professional relationships that four year universities and professional programs expect. It is also not uncommon for transfer students to experience higher levels of academic rigor at four year institutions compared to some institutions from which they transfer (Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010).

It is reasonable to assume that students who transfer into social work programs experience the same barriers as other transfer students. By identifying the challenges that transfer and all at-risk students face, schools of social work will be better positioned to respond to these identified challenges by creating proactive programming that increases students' engagement throughout their academic journey. Examples may include: creating new pathways for social work transfer students to BSW programs (ie: articulation agreements with local community colleges), explicit and intrusive advising requirements when they arrive at schools of social work, "peer mentoring" programs to help acclimate new transfer students through structured interaction and activities with current BSW juniors and seniors, and most importantly, the creation of an environment that is welcoming and engaging.

Military Students

With the varying levels of military troop deployments around the world in recent years, many who are serving are returning home from active duty eager to re-establish a civilian life. The 2011 GI Bill provides increased financial aid opportunities for those serving or who have served in the military to utilize their benefits to attend post-secondary educational institutions ("The Post-9/11 GI-Bill," 2011). However, some return from active duty assignments with a complex set of issues that can make college success extremely challenging (Flynn & Hassan, 2010). Many returning service members discover a civilian environment that is not well equipped to accommodate issues relating to their health challenges such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), general health care and physical hardships caused by Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI), "employment readjustment", and a myriad of other issues (Flynn & Hassan, 2010).

A growing military literature (Allen & Haynie, 2008; Hassan et al., 2010; Hemerly-Brown, 2010; Romey, 2011; "The Post-9/11 GI-Bill," 2011; Zinger & Cohen, 2010) suggests a host of important resources necessary to meet some of the challenging issues facing many military students. Positive peer to peer exchanges, advising, and faculty student interactions may be even more vital for military students to successfully enter, adjust, and succeed in schools of social work and in overall college environments than non-military students.

It is not uncommon for military students to feel a sense of loss with regard to relationships that were forged between other military personnel when actively serving. However, many military students find that universities who support Student Veterans Associations (SVAs), have an office of Military Support Services, and who are classified as a "Military Friendly School" offer important engagement opportunities that foster positive

exchanges between other military students, faculty, and peers regarding their college experiences and provide a level of encouragement and support while pursuing their degree (Hemerly-Brown, 2010).

Social Work Education

The purpose of social work education is to prepare students to become competent, professional practitioners that promote social justice and help diverse and often vulnerable populations. Schools of social work require students to complete professional programming that combines a curriculum of evidence-based course work with practice based field internships to effectively prepare them for professional practice with diverse client populations. This professional programming takes place both explicitly and implicitly, within the classroom and in professional environments through internships or "field education". The explicit curriculum is comprised of instructional programming, identified coursework, and is governed by university and school policies. The implicit curriculum materializes in the educational environment (classroom and field education) in which the explicit curriculum is delivered (Council on Social Work Education, 2009).

In virtually all schools of social work, both the classroom and field are the primary environments through which the explicit curriculum is delivered (Council on Social Work Education, 2009). Due to content and teaching pedagogy, many social work programs have smaller classroom sizes than those in non-professionally designated institutional units, especially at the undergraduate level. The intent is to facilitate opportunities for students to learn necessary interactive skill sets to effectively practice within the professional environment through hands on role play activities, classroom discussions, and student group exchanges requiring critical thinking and ethical decision making. These exchanges provide a direct interface between

faculty members and students that facilitate an interactive learning environment. "It is imperative that students in professional programs be able to put into practice what they have learned in the classroom. To help students become capable and competent practitioners requires that they have training in self-awareness, knowledge acquisition, and skill building" (Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009, p. 258).

Most schools of social work have implicit advising guidelines to further extend the role of academic and professional interaction. An advisor is someone who not only answers student's questions about degree requirements and academic policies but also helps students learn the skills necessary to be successful within university and professional settings (Darling, 2015; Workman, 2015; Grites & Gordon, 2009; Koerin, Harrigan, & Reeves, 1990). This is done by fostering a professional relationship with each student relevant to their academic, personal, and professional identity (Sayles & Shelton, 2005). It is this advisor-advisee relationship that establishes a foundation from which students model their interactions with other faculty and professional field educational experiences; ultimately setting the stage for future professional employment.

Review of Empirical Findings

The majority of empirical studies that have examined college student engagement have been theory driven. Studies have utilized Astin's (1984) theory of involvement and variations of Bourdieu (1984), Coleman (1988), and Putnam's (2000) theory of social capital to explain the importance of 'who' students engage with and the impact of that engagement on their academic success (Bowen et al, 2011; Dika, 2012; Daly & Sidel, 2013; Griswold, 2014; Hu, 2011; Kuh et al, 2008; Metz, 2006; Popkess & McDaniel, 2011). In particular, Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement, defined as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the

student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1999, p.518), has helped researchers focus on student success by understanding how students engage in their college experiences and how this engagement influences student persistence, student retention, and graduation rates (Kuh et al, 2007).

Much of the student engagement research has focused on the interactions that occur between students and their peers (Frazier & Eighmy, 2012; Rocconi, 2011; Zhao & Kuh, 2004), students and faculty (Cook-Sather, 2012; Daly & Sidell, 2013; Dika, 2012; Keys, Schneider, & King, 2013; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005), students and profession (Beachboard, Beachboard, Li, & Adkison, 2011; Bowen et al., 2011; Hu & Wolniak, 2013), and generally speaking, students and their post-secondary institutions of learning (Soria & Stebleton, 2013). Most of these studies have either collected primary, cross sectional, self-reported student data (Hu, 2011; Bowen et al., 2011) or examined secondary, cross sectional data sets, such as the NSSE that included the aforementioned student engagement types (Becker et al, 2009; Brown & Burdsal, 2012; Daley & Sidell, 2013; Dika, 2012; Griswold, 2014; Kuh, 2007; Mertz, 2006; Popkess & McDaniel, 2011). While some variation in outcome data exists, most of the empirical literature indicates a positive, correlational relationship between an increase in student engagement and better grades (Kuh, 2009[1]) and increased persistence and overall graduation rates (Hutchison, 2015; Popkess & McDaniel 2011xc f; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008; Mertz, 2006; Kuh, 2002). Specifically, Kuh et al. (2008) posited that student engagement in educationally purposeful activities were positively related to academic outcomes (grades) of first year students. This is an important finding given that the better the grades first year students earn the more likely they are to persist into their second year of college and beyond (Kuh et al., 2008).

Other empirical studies have utilized data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to understand how students engage in their college experiences by utilizing social capital theory to frame student's engagement (Berry, 2008; Griswold, 2014; Duplantis, 2013; Mertz, 2006; Miracle, 2013; Shinde, 2008). The NSSE was developed in 1998 as a new approach to gathering information about students' educational experiences and piloted in 1999 with funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts. It was created to address the need to examine student engagement and gain a better understanding of student educational experiences in college.

The survey reports cross sectional data reflecting how freshman and senior students, at participating universities and colleges, engage with their peers, faculty, and institutions. The findings from these studies vary depending on participating universities and colleges but in general, are good measures of student engagement (Kuh et al., 2008). A disciplined specific study would afford a closer examination of the amount of time and effort BSW students spend engaging in various activities that positively contribute to their educational experiences.

Very little research has been conducted on student engagement within schools of social work. Of the limited social work literature, Daly & Sidell (2013) examined the quality of social work advising in a small BSW program. This study found that only 50% of students advising experience was "above average", indicating that half of the polled students may not have received the quality experience they were seeking. Moriarty, Manthorpe, Chauhan, Jones, Wenman, & Hussein (2009) interviewed social work students, social work educators, and higher education administrators pertaining to recruitment and retention of students in four English, higher education institutions which highlighted key barriers to persistence and graduation relating to student populations who access social work education later on in life. Examples of

these barriers included: learning disabilities that were not identified, the necessity for students to be employed part time or full time, caring responsibilities for family members, and poor academic strength. Lastly, Martin and Pyles' (2012) study examined how well social work programs prepared university administrators to be a part of the Engaged University Movement which they argue should be included as a subfield of community practice.

Despite the ability of the NSSE to provide insights into experiences for students of many disciplines, there are no empirical studies that have utilized the NSSE to examine bachelor of social work (BSW) student engagement; specifically, BSW student populations labeled "at-risk" or "vulnerable". This dissertation will utilize 2011 NSSE data from five universities in the southeastern United States that have BSW programs, to examine how "at-risk" BSW students engage in their college experience.

Theory

Many theories have been associated with understanding student persistence, student success, and student engagement, most notably, General Systems Theory and Social Capital Theory. These theoretical perspectives provide insights to better understand college student engagement focused on at-risk students in undergraduate schools of social work. Fawcett (1999) posited that theory is comprised of "...a set of relatively concrete and specific concepts and propositions that describe or link those concepts" (p. 4). Theories facilitate an understanding of how and why phenomena happens, offering a way by which to study and understand daily life and identified social problems.

General System Theory

General Systems Theory (GST), as articulated by Stein (1974) and von Bertalanffy (1981) provides a framework for how large systems function; how the many moving parts or "cogs in a wheel" behave independently yet are essential to the functioning of the entire system. GST emerged in the social science field during the 20th century to explain how groups or parts of large systems interrelate in the social world. Von Bertalnaffy was the pioneer of GST and focused on its usefulness of exploring cause and effect in the social world (Turner, 2011).

Similar to other large organizations, universities are comprised of many individual parts that, although sometimes operating autonomously, contribute to the functioning of a larger system or "the whole". Student engagement, intended to facilitate student success, has been identified as a function and a goal of many universities and can be understood within the context of the larger university system (Kuh, 2009)[1]. GST may provide a useful lens by which to understand how the components and activities associated with student engagement occur within a system of postsecondary learning. The continuum of activities most associated with student engagement within the larger college and university systems range from recruitment and retention initiatives to post graduation employment.

University admissions' offices are the first to engage with students as they seek to recruit students from high schools, community colleges, and those currently in the work force. The engagement strategies of admission offices include direct mailings, electronic emails and social media campaigns, and on campus 'open house' type opportunities where potential students can engage with current students, faculty, and university environments. These types of recruitment

activities are vitally important in helping students assess their fit for an institution and can be regarded as student engagement with university.

Another student engagement with university activity is the admissions process which is further linked to the financial aid opportunities, central to most at-risk student's ability to attend college. A student's decision to attend a particular college or university may depend on the financial aid package that the federal government and/or the university awards (Stewart, Doo, & Kim, 2015). The speed and accuracy of the information that admissions and financial aid offices provide potential students often influences a student's decision to enroll in a particular university and plays an important role in the initial engagement of a student with the university environment. Stewart et al. (2015) further state that financial aid plays an important role in student retention and graduation rates based on annual award packages and a student's overall debt accumulated upon graduation. These types of recruitment activities refer back to a key component of Kuh's (2009)[1] definition of student engagement by referencing what colleges and institutions do to induce participation in key decision activities. For at-risk students in particular, who may not have had the cultural capital "...degree of ease and familiarity that one has with the 'dominant' culture of a society" (Bills, 2000, p. 90), associated with college educated parents or siblings, these recruitment activities become the primary signals for the kinds of experiences they can anticipate at any university system.

Basically, a systems perspective compels us to consider peer to peer engagement, student with faculty engagement, student with university engagement, and student with profession engagement as a totality of activities and components of the larger university system that contribute to a holistic student engagement experience. For example, peer to peer engagement

may take the form of academic study groups, social work student associations, peer mentoring programs, social work student networking groups, or student engagement with alumni organizations. Student engagement with faculty manifests by faculty interacting with students in the classroom, providing professional and developmental feedback on papers, discussing ideas that originate from within the classroom but extend outside of the classroom learning environment, and working with students in an advising capacity. Examples of student engagement with university activities include first-year seminars, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, common intellectual experiences, service learning, diversity experiences, study abroad, and senior capstone experiences.

Lastly, student engagement with profession highlights time and effort associated with activities and professional development that occur outside of the classroom, in professional work environments and in the community. Activities and professional development include the formulation of personal values and professional code of ethics necessary for professional practice, an appreciation and understanding of difference for people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds, a student's overall contribution to the welfare of community, and a deeper understanding of self as it relates to work with others.

These experiences, specific to social work, occur through field education where students work with clients to perform the role of practitioner and where they connect and integrate theory to practice (CSWE, 2008). As noted above, there are many types of student engagement experiences. Systems theory suggests that each one does not happen in isolation but is a part of an overall constellation of services and activities provided by larger systems. As such, different student populations engage in these activities and experiences in different ways. GST provides a

structure or conceptual scaffolding to better understand the relationship between at-risk students and their college engagement and how universities facilitate opportunities or create barriers for students to engage.

It is important to note that all of these student engagement experiences provide a foundation for students to be successful. A weakness in any one may be compensated by another, but ideally all areas of engagement coalesce to provide for students to be successful. For example, a student may not be as engaged in "larger" university related activities but may be highly engaged with their peers and faculty in their major. Higher levels of student engagement between peers and faculty may offset lower levels of engagement within the "larger" university. By conceptualizing the university as a "system" and the various types of student engagement as "cogs" or domains where engagement takes place, universities and programs of study, specifically bachelor of social work programs, can identify where students are challenged to engage and create programming that encourages and facilitates student engagement.

Social Capital Theory

While GST positions and links the various components of engagement activities within the university system, Social Capital Theory (SCT) anchors student engagement to different types of resources that are important and have value in different realms. Initially introduced by Bourdieu (1986) and further developed by both Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000), SCT posits that social relationships are often associated with increased access to information, skill sets, and power through shared networks of people.

All three theorists describe and define social capital using slightly different lenses. Bourdieu (1986) refers to social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources

which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition or in other words, to membership in a group" (p. 21). Coleman (1988) describes social capital as "… a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether individual person or corporate actors – within a structure" and further explicates that "…social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible" (p. S98). Putnam (2000) broadly defines social capital as "connections among individual social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (p.19).

All three definitions highlight common components that are integral to SCT: that social networks are key, that trust must be an essential aspect, and lastly that there are benefits or outcomes that occur as a result of one's social networks. Social networks can be classified as being both formal and informal; from simple friendships, companionships, relationships with family members, to professional working relationships. Trust provides a level of confidence that facilitates the functionality of a social network. A social network built on a strong foundation of trust allows individuals or "actors", to feel confident that the resources associated with a social network are accessible. Lastly, the outcomes or benefits associated with social networks such as "actual or potential resources", "reciprocity", or "achievement" provide all actors access to additional resources. It is important to note that outcomes of social networks can be both positive and negative depending on an actor's goal or network affiliation. In essence, social networks have valuable resources that are embedded in one's personal network (Flap, 2004).

Social capital is generated in three types of networks: "bonding", "bridging" and "linking" (Hawkins & Maurer, 2012; Lin, 2001; Putnam, 2000, Sreter & Woolcock, 2004; Tzanakis, 2013). Bonding social capital refers to "…trusting and cooperative relations between members of a network who see themselves as being similar, in terms of their shared social identity" (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004, p. 654-655). In this study, peer to peer student engagement is most closely associated with bonding social capital. For example: class participation, working collaboratively with other students inside and outside of class, tutoring other students, and involvement with a community-based projects.

According to Putnam (2000), bridging refers to interactions that occur across social divisions. These social divisions are referred to by Szreter and Woolcock (2004) as "… relations of respect and mutuality between people who know that they are not alike in some soci-demographic (or social identity) sense (differing by age, ethnic group, class, etc…)" (p. 655). In this study student engagement with faculty is most closely associated with bridging social capital. Examples of this are: talking about career plans with faculty members and advisors, discussing ideas from classes with faculty members outside of class, getting information about various department or university resources, and working with faculty on research projects.

Linking, according to Hawkins and Maurer (2012) refers to "… the byproduct of exchanges that arise from relationships that individuals and communities build with institutions and people who have relative power over them" (p. 359). In this study student engagement with profession is the most closely associated with both linking and bridging social capital. Examples of this type of social capital might be providing access to services, jobs, or other types of resources.

Students who can successfully create social interactions that build bridging, bonding, and linking networks may greatly benefit socially, academically, and professionally. This leads to a question about the degree to which membership in social networks benefit or detract from student engagement for students who are classified at- risk? In other words, to what extent do "at-risk" social work students engage with their peers, faculty, university, and profession (see Figure 2.1).

Despite the known relationship between student engagement and student success in student populations in general, very little is known about social work students engagement experiences in their programs of study. The few studies that address social work student engagement do so tangentially. For example, Daly & Sidell (2013) make note of the importance of academic advising in a small social work program and Martin and Pyles (2012) discuss a lack of social work administrative training needed to facilitate active student engagement. However, there have been no empirical studies that have examined how social work students engage with their peers, faculty, university, and profession and none using the NSSE.

The NSSE provided an opportunity to examine ways social work students engage in their academic and pre-professional environments; particularly those who may be considered at-risk. Social Work students in general, may be more likely to exhibit various forms of student engagement than students in other programs for any number of reasons: small student faculty ratios, small classroom sizes, an integrated explicit and implicit curriculum providing purposeful engagement opportunities, and the fact social work's signature pedagogy is field education which facilitates student's learning through applied, professional applications. Social work

programs, with an accentuated focus on student engagement are well poised to examine, study, and contribute to the student engagement and student success literature.

This dissertation examined the various forms of student engagement (peer to peer, student with faculty, student with university, and student with profession from five southeastern universities who participated in the 2011 NSSE and who also have accredited BSW programs. This secondary data analysis identified various at-risk students from BSW programs (first generation college students, transfer students, and military students) and examined relationships between at-risk students and the different domains of student engagement. Guided by GST, the study asked if there is a relationship among different types of student engagement in a group of BSW students and whether the relationships vary based on the at-risk status of the BSW students. The outcome of the data analysis may assist schools of social work with a better understanding of how at-risk social work students engage and what engagement opportunities can be employed to induce participation in key decision activities that foster success. Secondly, guided by SCT, the study examined the predictors of different types of student engagement. In summary, the guiding research questions were:

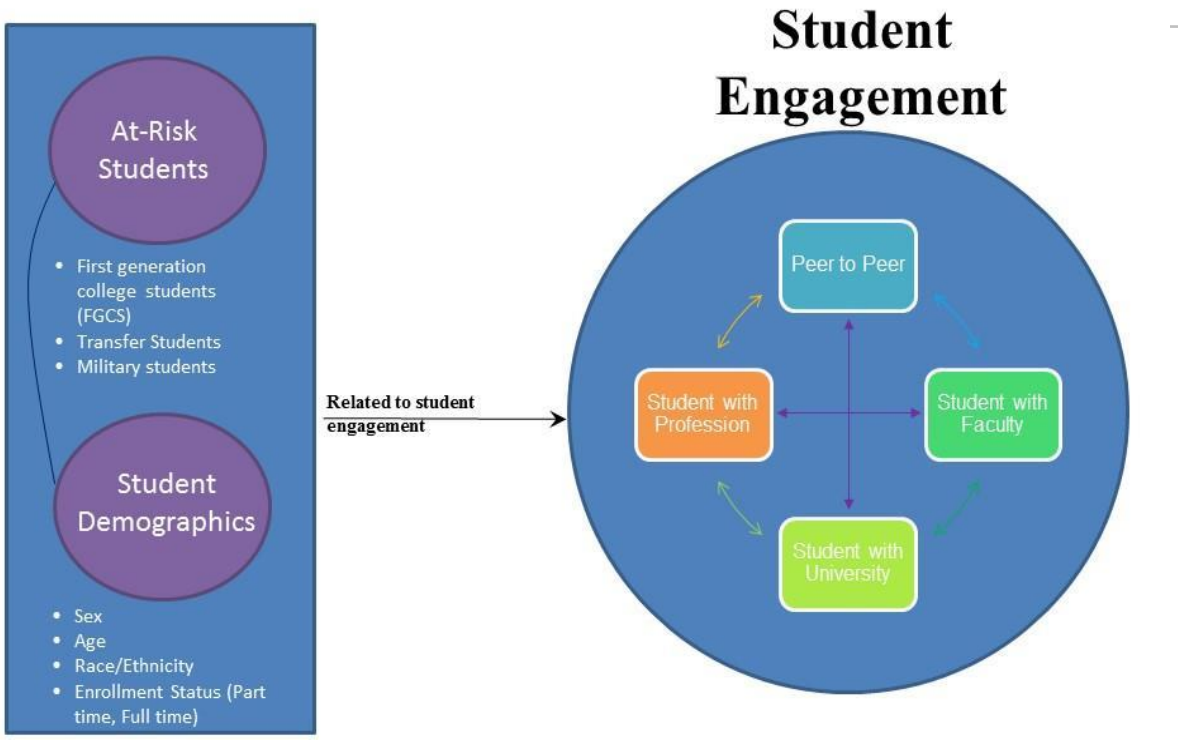
1. Is there a relationship between the different types of student engagement? Although general systems theory and empirical evidence would suggest that there is a positive relationship between student engagement and student success, it isn't know what the relationship is among the four types of student engagement (peer to peer, student with faculty, student with university, and student with profession). This study is an attempt to answer this question.

2. What are the differences in student engagement for each of the at-risk groups? The literature suggests that the levels of engagement may vary by some at-risk groups. Based on the literature, the following hypotheses are offered for testing:

- FGCS have less student engagement in all four student engagement types than do their non-FGCS counterparts.
- Transfer students have less engagement in all four student engagement types than do their non-transfer counterparts.
- Military students from institutions that are classified as being "military friendly" have as much peer to peer engagement and student engagement with university as do their non-military counterparts from "non-friendly military" institutions.

3. To what extent does membership in at-risk groups predict student engagement? In addition, the literature suggests that demographics influence the types of student engagement and need to be considered as part of this question. For example, age and enrollment status may be predictors of student engagement. Students who are older tend to have lower levels of student engagement. Figure 2.1, presents an overview and relationship of the study variables.

Figure 2.1. Overview of study variables and relationships to be examined



Chapter 3

Methodology

Chapter Three outlines the methods of this study that address the NSSE survey and data collection procedure, sample population, description and measures of the variables, and the data analysis plan. Additionally, a brief statement on human subjects' research protections addressing the methodology of this study is also provided.

NSSE Survey and Data Collection Procedure

NSSE Survey

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Institute for Effective Educational Practice is sponsored through Indiana University, Bloomington at their Center for Postsecondary Research. The NSSE documents dimensions of quality in undergraduate education and provides information and assistance to colleges, universities, and other organizations to improve student learning. The NSSE's primary activity is annually surveying college students to assess the extent to which they engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development. The survey consists of a self-administered questionnaire emailed to all undergraduate freshman and senior students at participating institutions. The survey collects information in five categories: "...(1) participation in dozens of educationally purposeful activities, (2) institutional requirements and the challenging nature of coursework, (3) perceptions of the college environment, (4) estimates of educational and personal growth since starting college, and (5) background and demographic information" (NSSE, 2015, p.1).

The 2011 NSSE consisted of 100 items that captured student's demographic information (gender, age, racial/ethnicity, enrollment status, etc…), self-reported engagement activities and perceived levels of student engagement. The responses to the items were in the form of a 4-point Likert-type scale: (1-Never, 2-Sometimes, 3-Often, 4.-Very often.) or (1-Very little, 2-Sometimes, 3-Often, 4-Very much). Within the five categories, the survey targeted five areas to assess levels of student engagement: Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive Campus Environment. Each of the five assessment areas had a topic question that corresponded to the individual questions that followed in that section. For example, one target question, "In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?" was phrased prior to the set of questions that followed so that students had context to frame a response (NSSE, 2015, "NSSE Survey Instruments", para. 1). One of the associated questions that followed was, "Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions".

> Institutions use NSSE data to identify aspects of the undergraduate experience inside and outside the classroom that can be improved through changes in policies and practices more consistent with good practices in undergraduate education. This information is also used by prospective college students, their parents, college counselors, academic advisers, institutional research officers, and researchers to learn more about how students spend their time at different colleges and universities and what they gain from their experiences. (NSSE, 2015, "How are NSSE results used?", para. 1)

NSSE Procedure

Administration and recruitment for the NSSE involved active collaboration between NSSE staff at the NSSE Institute for Effective Education Practice at Indiana University and participating campuses for approximately a 12-month time span. Upon registration approval,

NSSE participating universities were assigned a "Project Services Team" that provided assistance with every aspect of preparing and administering the NSSE, including invitations, reminder messages, and actual delivery of the online survey.

Project Service Teams collaborated with each participating institution to acquire accurate student contact information; both student email and local addresses so that customized emails or post cards providing the online survey link were sent to all registered freshman and senior students. Continuing students, those classified as registered sophomore and junior students were not included. Identified freshman and senior students who do not respond to the initial survey invitation receive a customized "Reminder 1" email or letter via the United States Post Office. After the first reminder, those who still had not completed the survey received a customized "Reminder 2" email or post card requesting participation. A customized "Reminder 3" email was sent to all non-respondents followed by a "final reminder". This process ensured consistency and comparability among institutions and established a foundation for accurate comparisons; see details in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. 2011 NSSE summary recruitment method

Summary of NSSE Recruitment—Email or Regular Mail		
	Email	Regular Mail
Survey Format	Online	Online
Institutional Considerations	Email addresses are accurate and readily available. All first-year and senior students contacted, unless a random sample requested.	Local addresses are accurate and readily available; email addresses are not reliable. Random sample taken based on undergraduate enrollment.
Invitation	Customized email messages are sent to all first-year and senior students.	Customized letters sent to random sample via USPS. Students given instructions to complete the survey online.
Reminder 1	Nonrespondents receive customized emails.	Nonrespondents receive a customized reminder letter.
Reminder 2	Nonrespondents receive customized emails.	Nonrespondents receive a customized postcard. This is the final contact if no email addresses provided.
Reminder 3	Nonrespondents receive customized emails.	Nonrespondents receive customized emails, if addresses provided.
Final Reminder	Nonrespondents receive customized emails.	Nonrespondents receive final customized email, if addresses provided.

http://nsse.indiana.edu/html/recruitment_methods.cfm

In 2011, 668 U.S college institutions participated in the NSSE. The national response rate was 33%; with a senior response rate of 37%. The various participating institutions were categorized into localities: city, suburb, town, and rural. There was very little variation in overall

response rates based on locality with the exception of institutions located in towns having had a slightly higher overall response rate (36%) and senior response rate (40%). Of the 668 participating institutions, 175 were located in the southeast. Of this subset, senior student response rates remained the same (36%). The survey was administered in an online-web format (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2011). See appendix D.

The institutions identified in this study all used the web only or online format. Since its inception in 2000, the NSSE has been used in several studies that examined relationships between student engagement, academic achievement (grades), persistence, and college graduation. These studies (Becker et al, 2009; Brown & Burdsal, 2012; Daley & Sidell, 2013; Dika, 2012; Griswold, 2014; Kuh, 2007; Mertz, 2006; Popkess & McDaniel, 2011) were included in Chapter Two in the Review of Empirical Findings.

Sample

For this dissertation study, a purposive sample was drawn from the administration of the NSSE in 2011 from five universities in one southeast state that had accredited, Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programs from the Council on Social Work Education. The 2011 NSSE survey year was selected because it capitalized on the highest number of NSSE participating colleges and universities that had BSW programs in the identified southeast state. Four of the institutions were public universities and one was private. One was also classified as a Historical Black College and University (HBCU). Four out of the five universities were located in urban environments with one located in a rural setting. All universities ranged in size; three had less than 6,000 registered undergraduate students each and two had more than 15,000 registered undergraduate students each. In addition, two out of the five universities had been recognized as

"military friendly" colleges/universities by exhibiting "leading practices" in recruiting and supporting post-military students. There are a number of organizations that compile information from various colleges and universities that rate and score an institution's level of support for military students and military family supports. Military Friendly, a division of Victory Media, conducts annual surveys of colleges and universities to create weighted scores that institutions are designated to determine "leading practices" and "military friendly" status by examining the following categories: Academic Quality, Support on Campus, Admission & Orientation, Graduation and Retention Rates, Military Student Body Composition, Career Outcomes, Government Approval, Tuition Assistance, Flexibility, and Military Spouse Policies (Military Friendly Schools, 2015).

This study analyzed the data from these five institutions and examined undergraduate, BSW seniors from the 2011 NSSE. The NSSE survey targets only freshman and senior student populations; a total of 211 BSW freshman and seniors in the five targeted universities and colleges completed the NSSE survey during the targeted year. Each institution provided the researcher with their institution's BSW NSSE data via a ".sav" file associated with the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 23. Social work seniors became the target population because freshman students are not a core component of social work programs.

Measures

As noted above, the measures for this study were based on the original five areas of student engagement identified by the NSSE: Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive Campus Environment. See Appendix B.

NSSE Indicators

NSSE authors had created institutional level indicators, which they referred to as "benchmarks" of effective educational practice associated with the five areas of student engagement listed above. However, this dissertation used the term "indicator" or "scale" in lieu of "benchmark" to be more consistent with overall student engagement literature.

> These indicators were created with a blend of theory and empirical analysis. Items were rigorously tested using both quantitative and qualitative methods during a multi-year development process. This process involved conducting focus groups and cognitive interviews with students and two years of pilot testing and analysis. Various statistical procedures were used to assess the validity and reliability of the Engagement Indicators including principal components analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, reliability analysis, generalizability theory, and item response theory." (NSSE, 2015, "Engagement Indicators", para. 1)

The NSSE indicators of interest in this study are Active and Collaborative Learning (ACL), Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI), and Supportive Campus Environment (SCE). The 2011 alpha scores for these three NSSE indicators are .67, .74, and .80 respectively. For full description of the 2011 NSSE measurement scales. See Appendix C.

The ACL indicator combines survey items about ways in which students collaborate, learn, and engage with their peers in and outside of the classroom. Each scale item is measured by students responding to the target question: "In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?" See items in table 3.2. The SFI indicator combines survey items that identify ways, formally and informally, that faculty engage with students to positively influence cognitive growth, development, and persistence. Each indicator item is measured by students responding to the target question: "In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you

done each of the following?" See items in table 3.2. The SCE indicator combines survey items that identify student's perceptions of how much an institution encourages and emphasizes services and activities that supports student learning. Each indicator item is measured by students responding to the target question: "To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following?" See items in table 3.2.

Several items in the NSSE are consistent with the conceptual definition of peer to peer, student to faculty and student to university engagement identified for this dissertation and are described below. There were no identified indicators that reflected student engagement with profession (SPE). However, the following items were identified based on social work education's learning goals and objectives of the field experience and will serve as a proxy to measure the professional engagement that is derived from student field experiences. Alternately stated, SPE is the time and effort associated with activities and professional development that students engage in, in the classroom and outside of the classroom in the field. These items were used in other NSSE studies to measure such constructs as civic or community engagement (Griswald, 2014). Each scale item is measured by students responding to the target question: "To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?" See items in table 3.2.

A review of the entire NSSE study items revealed several additional items which the literature suggested could be added to the indicators to enhance the measure for each of the student engagement concepts. Table 3.2 shows the items used for each of the study measures, designating which items were in the original list of NSSE indicators and which were additional items. In sum, the measures used for Peer to Peer, Student to Faculty, and Student to University

consisted of the originally identified NSSE items associated with the NSSE conceptualization combined with other NSSE items that strengthened these engagement measures. The Student to Profession measure was developed by the researcher with items used by the NSSE to measure civic or community engagement from other parts of the NSSE which would be consistent with student to profession engagement for social work students.

At-risk Measures

The variable 'First Generation College Student' (FGCS) was developed by combining two of the NSSE questions: "What is the highest level of education your father completed" and "What is the highest level of education your mother completed". These items were recoded to compute a new variable that captured levels of parental education. The response options for these questions were as follows: "Did not finish high school", "Graduated from high school", "Attended college but did not complete degree", "Completed an associate's degree (A.A., A.S., etc.)", "Completed a bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)", "Completed a master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.)", and "Completed a doctoral degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc.)".

The term first-generation college student is defined in the literature in different ways. A traditional, 'narrow definition' describes a student from a family where "…neither of their parents had more than a high school education" (Choy, 2001, p. xxx). An 'expanded definition' of FGCS describes a student from a family whose parents may have had some college experience but did not earn a degree. This expanded definition captured a wider range of parental education than the 'Narrow' definition by including up to some college experience but no earned degree and will be the definition used in this dissertation. In this study, the 'expanded' definition will be used to identify and describe FGCS. Ultimately, an unsuccessful college attempt could

impact the necessary "cultural capital" available to their child requisite of a four year college environment.

If both parents of the student had no more than a high school diploma, they were classified as FGCS "Narrow". If a student reported educational status for only one parent, and that parent had nothing more than a high school education, they were also classified as FGCS "Narrow". If both parents of a student had some college or less but has not completed a degree, they were classified as FGCS "Expanded". If a student reported educational status for only one parent, and that parent had some college or less but had not completed a degree, they were also classified as FGCS "Expanded" (see table 3.1).

Table 3.1. First Generation College Students, Defined

First Generation College Students, Defined

Definitions	First Generation	Not First Generation	Citation/Source
Narrow	● Did not finish high school ● Graduated from high school	● **Attended college but did not complete degree** ● **Completed an associate's degree (A.A., A.S., etc.)** ● Completed a bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.) ● Completed a master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.) ● Completed a doctoral degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc.)".	Choy (2001)
Expanded	● Did not finish high school ● Graduated from high school ● **Attended college but did not complete degree**	● **Completed an associate's degree (A.A., A.S., etc.)** ● Completed a bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.) ● Completed a master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.)	Derived from Pike and Kuh (2005)

The variable "Transfer Student" was captured in the NSSE by the following question: "Did you begin college at your current institution or elsewhere?" The dichotomous response options for this question were: "Started here" and "Started elsewhere". Those who selected "Started elsewhere" were identified as transfer students.

Lastly, the variable "Military Student" was captured in the NSSE by the following question: "Are you a current or former member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard?" The dichotomous response options for this question were: "No' or "Yes". Table 3.2. presents this study's engagement indicators and study measures, including conceptual and operational definitions for at-risk and student demographic variables used in this dissertation. It is a detailed list of items from the 2011 NSSE that were used in this study. The table summarizes the measures used, into the various domains of student engagement (peer to peer, student with faculty, student with university, and student with profession) including a conceptual definition, items associated with each domain, response categories and scoring, and lastly how each variable will be used in the model.

Table 3.2. Study measures

Study measures

Measure	**Conceptual definition**	**Items (original indicator) or (added) from the NSSE**	**Response Categories Scoring**	**Use in model**
Peer to Peer Student Engagement (9 items) (Bonding Social Capital)	Time and effort associated with peer to peer student interactions and activities (Kuh, 2003, 2009)	• Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions (used in ACL indicator) • Made a class presentation (used in ACL indicator) • Worked with other students on projects during class (used in ACL indicator) • Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments (used in ACL indicator) • Tutored or taught other students (used in ACL indicator) • Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course (used in ACL indicator) • Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.) (used in ACL indicator) • Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own (added item) • Had serious conversations with student s who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values (added item)	1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Very often Scores are summed with a maximum score of 36 and a minimum score of 9 such that the higher score indicates higher levels of peer to peer engagement	As dependent variable, interval level
Student with Faculty Engagement (6 items) (Bridging Social Capital)	Time and effort associated with activities and interactions with faculty (Kuh, 2009)	• Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor (used in SFI indicator) • Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor (used in SFI indicator) • Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty	1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Very often Scores are summed with a maximum score	As dependent variable, interval level

		members outside of class (used in SFI indicator) • Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student-life activities, etc.) (used in SFI indicator) • Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance (used in SFI indicator) • Used email to communicate with my instructor (added item)	of 24 and a minimum score of 6 such that the higher score indicates higher levels of student to faculty engagement	
Student with University Engagement (5 items) (Linking Social Capital)	Student's perceptions of how much an institution encourages and emphasizes services and activities that supports student learning (Kuh, 2009[1])	• Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically (used in SCE indicator) • Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) (used in SCE indicator) • Providing the support you need to thrive socially (used in SCE indicator) • Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds (added item) • Attended campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events (Griswold, 2014)	1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Very often 1 = Very little 2 = Some 3 = Quite a bit 4 = Very much Scores are summed with a maximum score of 16 and a minimum score of 4 such that the higher score indicates higher levels of student to university engagement	As dependent variable, interval level
Student with Profession Engagement (6 items) (Bridging and Linking Social Capital)	Time and effort associated with activities and professional development that students engage in and outside of the classroom and through field education	• Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds (EPAS, 2008) • Developing a personal code of values and ethics (EPAS, 2008) • Understanding yourself (EPAS, 2008) • Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills (EPAS) • Contributing to the welfare of your community (Griswold, 2014)	1 = Very little 2 = Some 3 = Quite a bit 4 = Very much Scores are summed with a maximum score of 24 and a minimum score of 6 such that the higher score indicates higher levels of student	As dependent variable, interval level

			with profession engagement	
At-risk student populations				
First Generation College Student (FGCS)	(1) A college or university student from a family where no parent or guardian has received more than a high school diploma (Choy, 2001), (2) a student from a family whose parents had some college experience but did not earn a degree, Derived from (Pike & Kuh, 2005),	• What is the highest level of education that your father completed • What is the highest level of education your mother completed	1 = Did not finish high school 2 = Graduated from high school 3 = Attended college but did not complete degree 4 = Completed an associate's degree (A.A., A.S., etc.) 5 = Completed a bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.) 6 = Completed a master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.) 7 = Completed a doctoral degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc.)	As independent variable, ordinal level: Recoded into: 1=FGCS "Narrow Definition" 2=FGCS "Expanded Definition" 3=Not FGCS
Transfer Student	Students who transfer to a college or university after beginning post-secondary education at another institution (e.g., community college or other four year school).	• Did you begin college at your current institution or elsewhere	1 = Started here 2 = Started elsewhere	As independent variable, dichotomous level Recoded as: 1= transfer student 0= non-transfer student
Military Student	Someone who is currently serving or is a former member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard	• Are you a current or former member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard	1 = No 2 = Yes	As independent variable, dichotomous level Recoded as: 1= Military 0= Non-Military
Student Demographics				
Sex		• Institution reported: Gender	1 = Male 2 = Female	As independent variable, dichotomous,

				Recoded as: 1= Female 0= Male
Age		• Age category	1 = Under 20 2= 20-24 3 = 25-34 4 = 35-44 5 = 45 and older	As independent variable, categorical
Race/Ethnicity		• Institution reported: Race or ethnicity	1 = African American/Black 2 = American Indian/Alaska Native 3 = Asian/Pacific Islander 4 = Caucasian/ White 5 = Hispanic 6 = Other 7 = Foreign 8 = Multi-racial/ ethnic 9 = Unknown	As independent variable, nominal level Recoded in to 1=non-White 0=White
Enrollment Status		• Institution reported: Enrollment status	1 = Part-time 2 = Full-time	As independent variable, dichotomous level Recoded as: 1= Part Time (<12 credit hours) 0= Full Time (≥ 12 credit hours)

In sum, a total of 9 items were used for the 'Peer to Peer Engagement' domain, a total of 6 items used for the 'Student Engagement with Faculty' domain a total of 5 items used for the 'Student Engagement with University' domain, and a total of 5 items used to create the 'Student Engagement with Profession' domain.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis were conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The 2011 NSSE data from all five universities were imported into SPSS and pre-screened. Pre-screening data involved examining the data set for input errors, missing data, outliers, linearity, and ascertaining that the data fit the assumption of the statistical procedures (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Pre-screening data began with a series of frequency distributions to determine missing data. Assessing for extreme values or multivariate outliers was done by utilizing stem leafs, histograms, and box plots. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to test for normality and linearity was assessed by the use of residual plots or "prediction errors" (Mertler & Vannatta, 2002).

Once pre-screening was complete, data analysis was conducted using univariate statistics to describe the sample population and bivariate and multivariate statistics to answer the research questions. The univariate data analysis was used to describe the sample population (sex, race/ethnicity, enrollment status, FGCS status, transfer status, and military status). For question 1, that asked about the relationships among the domains of student engagement, a Pearson's correlation coefficient which asks about the relationship between the four types of student engagement; each of which were measured at an interval level was conducted. For question 2, which asks about differences of engagement by at-risk groups, a series of t=tests were conducted with each group (a dichotomous variable) and each student engagement domain (interval measures). For question 3, which asks about membership in group (dichotomous variable) and student characteristics (nominal, ordinal, and interval) predict student engagement, a hierarchical and logistic regression analysis was used.

Human Subjects Research Protection

This study was being conducted as part of a university dissertation research project, which falls under the auspices of the Virginia Commonwealth University Institutional Review Board (VCU IRB). The IRB at VCU is charged with reviewing all research protocols involving human participants to ensure research is conducted ethically. The IRB is mandated by the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, title 45, to ensure the protection of human subjects during the research process (HHS.gov, 2015). There are three classifications of IRB reviews: full review, an expedited review, and an exempt review. Because all data was de-identified and had been previously collected, VCU IRB did not classify this research as human subject research and therefore, this study did not need IRB approval.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter reports the findings of the statistical analysis of the data. First, a description of the sample using univariate analysis is provided followed by, a presentation of missing data analysis and prescreening data. Next, the univariate and bivariate analysis of the each of the dependent measures is presented. Lastly, tests of hypotheses using bivariate and multivariate analyses is presented.

Description of Sample

This dissertation used secondary data generated by the 2011 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). A purposive, non-probability sample drawn from the administration of the NSSE in 2011 from five universities in one southeast state that have accredited, Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programs identified by the Council on Social Work Education was used.

The 2011 NSSE survey was selected because it capitalized on the highest number of NSSE participating colleges and universities that had BSW programs in that state at the time of this dissertation. In addition, data from two previous years (2009 and 2010) was accessible from one university and examined to determine if these data could be included to increase sample size. There were no statistically, significant, demographic differences by year (2009, 2010, 2011) for sex, race, age, and enrollment in this one university; therefore they were included in the data set.

Survey data from all five institutions were combined into one .sav file using SPSS's 'merge files' feature; insuring that each data set contained the same variables, simultaneously accounting for unique cases to be included. The 'select cases' feature was then used to identify BSW seniors only, the target population. All freshman BSW students (*n=68)* were removed from the data file. This left all BSW students who identified themselves as seniors (*n=143).*

Missing Data Analysis and Prescreening

Missing data can be a major dilemma in data analysis as some respondents miss or choose not to answer some survey items (Rubin & Babbie, 2010, and Tabachnick and Fiddell, 2007). The frequency distributions for responses associated with the survey items in this data set were first reviewed for missing data. This data set had eight cases where data were missing on the majority of the survey items. This represents 5.5% of the total cases. The eight cases were deleted resulting in a total sample size for this study of N=135. Among the 135 participants, two students had missing data on age and parent education, one student had a missing race response, and one student had missing data on all of the items associated with the dependent variable "student engagement with university". Data were examined for missing items in the development of the dependent variables; eight cases had one or two missing data points on

different items in one or more of the dependent variables. The 'replace missing values' procedure was used. All analyses were run on available data, N=135

Sample Characteristics

Demographic characteristics for the total BSW senior sample are summarized in Table 4.1. This sample group is predominantly female (88.1%), White (non-Hispanic) (47.8%), ages ranging from 20-34 (85.7%) to 35 and older (18.6%) with the majority enrolled as full time (12 credits or more) (89.6%). The age and race/ethnicity demographics were recoded to reflect and be consistent with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) demographic characteristics of full-time and part-time baccalaureate social work majors nationally (CSWE, 2014). The demographics of this sample are similar to those of the national BSW student population as reported to the Council on Social Work Education 2014, *Annual Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States report*: 85.8% female, 52% White (non-Hispanic), ages ranging from under 20 (16.9%), 20-34 (64.7%) to 35 and older (11.0%) with the majority BSW students enrolled as full time (88.1%) (CSWE, 2014).

Table 4.1. Sample Demographics

Sample Demographics

	Frequency *N*	Percent %
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian	0	0
Asian	3	2.2
Black or African American	49	36.6
White (Non-Hispanic)	64	47.8
Mexican or Mexican American	0	0

Puerto Rican	0	0
Other Hispanic Or Latino	1	.7
Multicultural	7	5.2
Other	1	.7
Prefer not to respond	9	6.8
Sex		
Female	118	88.1
Male	16	11.9
Age		
20-24	77	57.9
25-34	37	27.8
35-44	7	5.3
45-Older	12	9.0
Enrollment		
Part Time (<12 credits)	14	10.4
Full Time (>12 credits)	120	89.6

At-risk Student

As noted in Chapter Three, the variable 'First Generation College Student (FGCS)' was developed by combining two of the NSSE questions: "What is the highest level of education your father completed" and "What is the highest level of education your mother completed". FGCS has been defined in two ways using a "Narrow Definition" and an "Expanded Definition" (see table 3.1). Using the "Narrow Definition", 21.1% of the survey participants were identified as FGCS compared to 35.3% of the survey participants using the "Expanded Definition (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. At Risk Student Populations

At Risk Student Populations

Population	Frequency (*n*)	Percent (%)
First Generation College Student Status (Narrow Definition)		
Not-First Generation	105	78.9
First Generation	28	21.1
First Generation College Student Status (Expanded Definition)		
Not-First Generation	86	64.7
First Generation	47	35.3
Transfer Student Status		
Not-Transfer	68	50.7
Transfer	66	49.3
Military Student Status		
Not-Military	113	95.8
Military	5	4.2

Transfer student status was captured in the NSSE by the following question: "Did you begin college at your current institution or elsewhere?" The dichotomous response options for this question were: "Started here" and "Started elsewhere". Those who selected "Started elsewhere" were identified as transfer students. The sample was evenly split; 49.3% of the sample population identified as a transfer student (see table 4.2).

Military student status was captured in the NSSE by the following question: "Are you a current or former member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard?" The dichotomous response options for this question were: "No' or "Yes". Nearly all participants

(95.8%) indicated that they were not a military student (see table 4.2). Given this very small sample of military students (n=5), no further analyses using this variable were conducted.

Dependent Variables

The individual items that make up the dependent variables (Peer to Peer Student Engagement, Student Engagement with Faculty, Student Engagement with University, and Student Engagement with Profession) used in this study were presented in Chapter Three, table 3.2.

Instrumentation Reliability

Internal consistency is a statistical measure based on the correlations between different items on the same scale, subscale, or test (Jaccard & Becker, 2010). Measures of internal consistency were obtained for the four dependent variable scales in this study by calculating Cronbach's *alpha*. DeVellis (2012) suggests that *alpha* levels between .70 and .80 are respectable and .80 and .90 are very good. Reliability coefficients for these scales were at respectable and very good levels (*alpha* = .76 to .83) and even exceeded ones reported by the 2011 NSSE, which ranged .67 to .80 (NSSE, 2011). Table 4.3 presents these coefficients.

Table 4.3. Reliability Coefficients of Dependent Variables: Cronbach's alpha

Reliability Coefficients of Dependent Variables: Cronbach's alpha

	Number of items	Number of cases	Reliability
Peer to Peer Student Engagement	9	135	.76
Student to Faculty Engagement	6	135	.83
Student Engagement with University	5	135	.83
Student Engagement with Profession	5	135	.82

Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion

On all of the dependent variable scale items, a four point Likert scale was used for response categories: (1) Never, (2) Sometimes, (3) Often, and (4) Very Often. Table 4.4 presents univariate statistics for all the engagement measures.

Table 4.4. Univariate Statistics for Measures of Dependent Variables

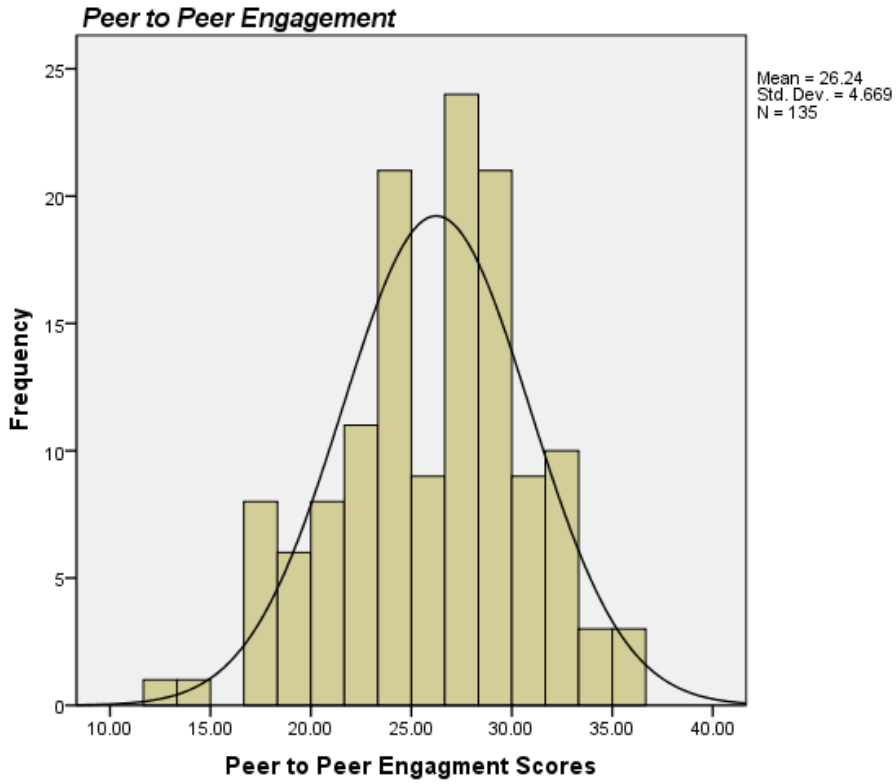
Univariate Statistics for Measures of Dependent Variables

Scales	N	Min- Max Scores	Mean	Standard Deviation
Peer to Peer Student Engagement	135	13-36	26.24	4.67
Student Engagement with Faculty	135	8-24	16.52	3.95
Student Engagement with University	135	5-20	14.17	3.54
Student Engagement with Profession	135	10-20	17.59	2.61

Peer to Peer Engagement Scale

The Peer to Peer scale measured the ways in which students collaborate, learn, and engage with their peers in and outside of the classroom. The scale was scored and summed with a maximum score of 36 and a minimum score of 9; such that the higher score indicated higher levels of peer to peer engagement. In this sample, BSW senior's scores ranged from a low of 13 to a high of 36, with a mean of 26.24 and a standard deviation of 4.67. This represents very close to a normal bell curved distribution which is illustrated by the histogram below.

Figure 4.1. Peer to Peer Engagement Histogram

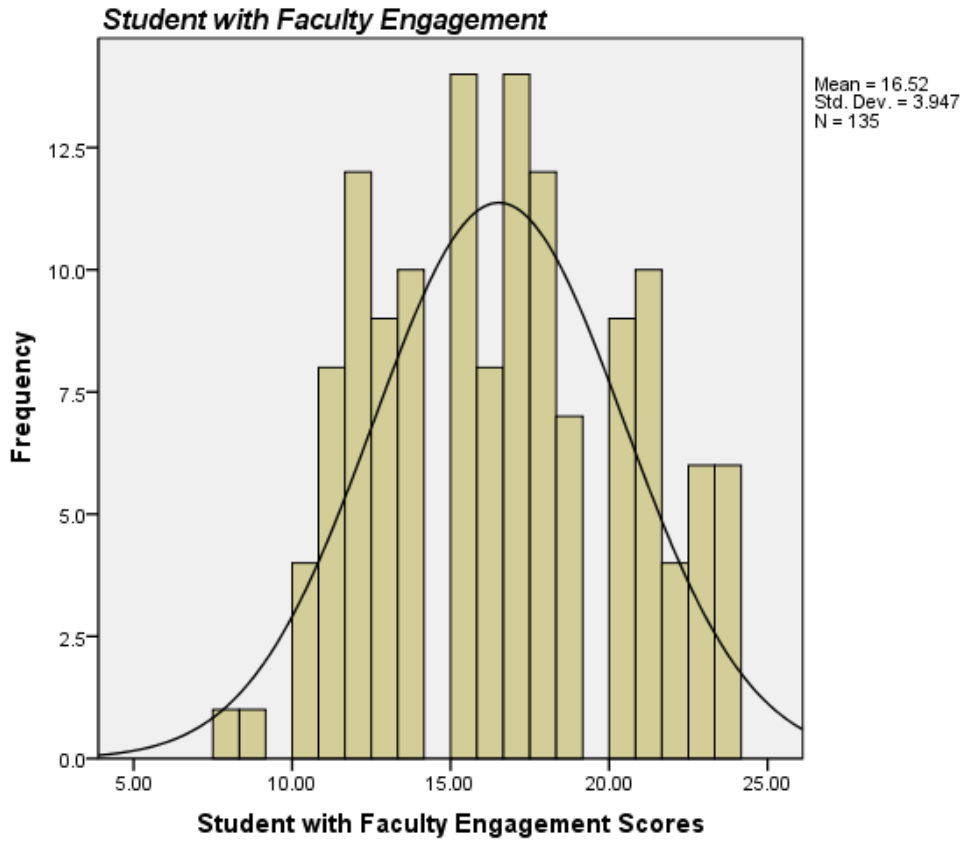


Student Engagement with Faculty Scale

The Student Engagement with Faculty scale combined survey items that identify ways, formally and informally, that faculty engage with students to positively influence cognitive growth, development, and persistence. The scale was scored and summed with a maximum score of 24 and a minimum score of 6; such that the higher score indicates higher levels of student engagement with faculty. In this sample, BSW senior's scores ranged from a low of 8 to a high of 24, with a mean of 16.52 and a standard deviation of 3.95. See histogram for a visual

representation in figure 4.2, which represented a relatively normal distribution of engagement scores.

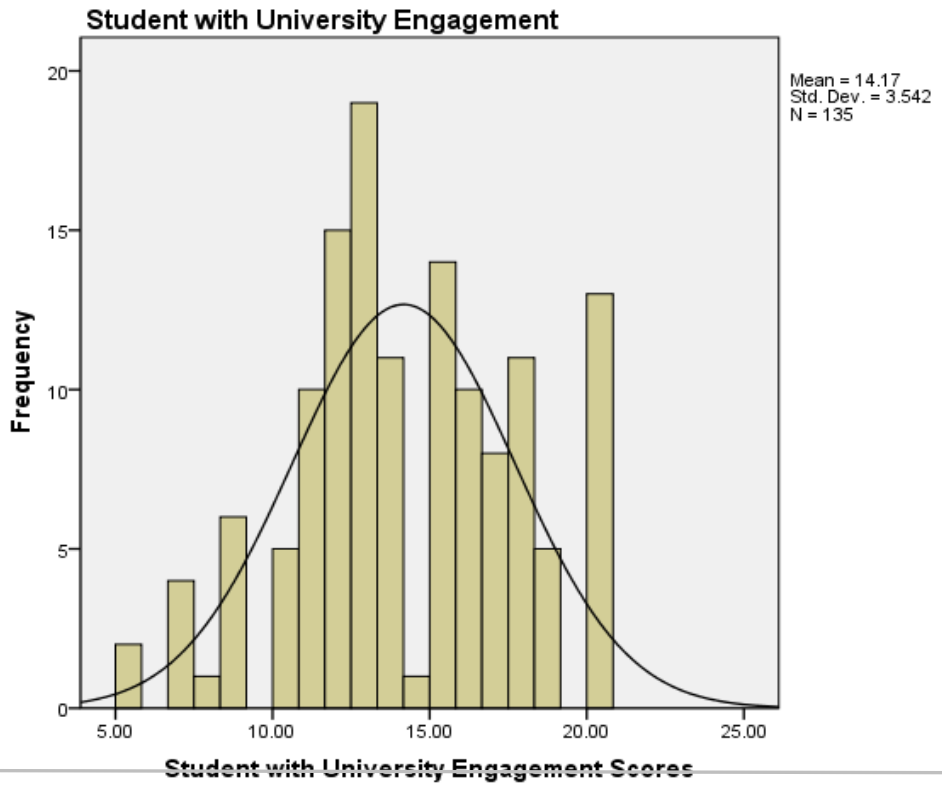
Figure 4.2. Student with Faculty Engagement histogram



Student Engagement with University

The Student Engagement with University scale combined survey items that identify student's perceptions of how much an institution encourages and emphasizes services and activities that engages student learning. The scale was scored and summed with a maximum score of 20 and a minimum score of 5; such that the higher score indicates higher levels of student engagement with the university. In this sample, BSW senior's scores ranged from a low of 5 to a high of 20, with a mean of 14.17 and a standard deviation of 3.54. See histogram for a visual representation in figure 4.3. This distribution is slightly, negatively skewed with a higher frequency of students with summed scores below the mean.

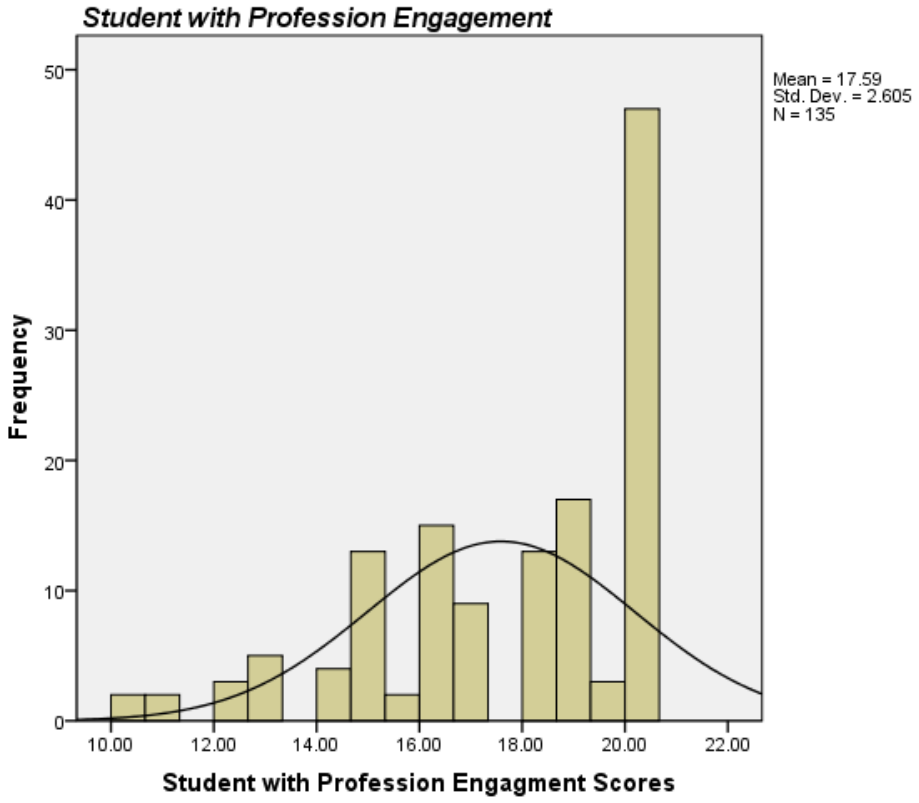
Figure 4.3. Student with University Engagement histogram



Student Engagement with Profession

The Student Engagement with Profession scale combined survey items that identify student's time and effort associated with activities and professional development that students engage in outside of the classroom and in the field. The scale was scored and summed with a maximum score of 20 and a minimum score of 5; such that the higher score indicates higher levels of student engagement with the profession. In this sample, BSW senior's scores ranged from a low of 10 to a high of 20, with a mean of 17.59 and a standard deviation of 2.61. See histogram for a visual representation in figure 4.4, indicating a positively skewed curve with extremely high student engagement scores.

Figure 4.4. Student Engagement with Profession histogram



Question One: Relationship among the Dependent Variables

The first research question in this study was, "Is there a relationship between the different types of student engagement?" The assumption that there would be a relationship between the four dependent variables was tested with Pearson correlation coefficients. Moderate to strong, positive, statistically significant, relationships were found between all pairs of measures (range of r =.34 to .73, p<.01). Drake, Johnson-Reid (2008) identify the strength of the relationship beginning with r = .20 as a weak correlation to r =.70 associated with a strong relationship. The strongest relationship observed is between Peer to Peer Engagement and Student Engagement with Faculty, r =.73, p<01. This suggests that students who have strong Peer to Peer Engagement also have strong Student with Faculty Engagement as well. The weakest relationship is between Student Engagement with Faculty and Student Engagement with Profession, r =.34, p<01. While this relationship may not be as strong as Peer to Peer and Student with Faculty, it had a positive, moderate relationship. This suggests that if students demonstrate moderate Student Engagement with Faculty, they will likely have similar engagement scores in Student with Profession Engagement as well. Table 4.5 represents the correlation coefficients for all of the dependent variables.

Table 4.5. Correlation Matrix Between all Dependent Variables

Correlation Matrix Between all Dependent Variables

Variable	Peer to Peer Engagement	Student Engagement with Faculty	Student Engagement with University	Student Engagement with Profession
	r (p)	*r (p)*	*r (p)*	*r (p)*
Peer to Peer Engagement	--	--	--	--
Student Engagement with Faculty	.730* (.000)	--	--	--
Student Engagement with University	.406* (.000)	.520* (.000)	--	--
Student Engagement with Profession	.348* (.000)	.340* (.000)	.427* (.000)	--

*p<.000, N=135

Running a Cronbach's *alpha* on all of the dependent variables yielded an *alpha* score of .77; suggesting all of the scales are measuring the underlying construct of student engagement.

Question Two: Relationship between At-Risk Groups and Student Engagement

Before answering the second research question, two additional analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between 1) demographic variables (sex, race, enrollment, and age) and at-risk student groups and, 2) demographic variables and the outcome variables (dependent variables).

Cross tabulations using a Pearson Chi-Square statistic reflecting the relationship between demographic variables and at-risk student variables revealed significant differences among the variables race and age and FGCS; both were statistically significant, indicating a relationship between race and FGCS, 5.307 (1, n=132)=.021, $p<.05$ and age and FGCS, 15.52 (3, n=131)=.001, $p<.001$. These relationships indicated a greater percentage of non-White students and students who are 35 years old or older than would be expected in a population where there was no relationship between age, race and FGCS. Additionally, the Chi-Square statistic revealed relationships between enrollment and age and transfer students. Both were statistically significant, indicating a relationship between enrollment and transfer status, 5.523 (1, n=133)=.019, $p<.05$ and age and transfer status, 31.54 (2, n=132)=.000, $p<.001$. This illustrated a greater percentage of transfer students enrolled in a part time manner and a greater percentage of transfer students were found being 25 years or older than expected (see table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Relationship between demographic and at risk student students- Pearson Chi Square test

Relationship between demographic and at risk student students- Pearson Chi Square test

	FGCS (35.3%)	Non-FGCS (64.7%)	p
Sex			
Female	35.9%	64.1%	.715
Male	31.3%	68.8%	
Race			
Non White	44.1%	55.9%	.021*
White (Non-Hispanic)	25.0%	75.0%	
Enrollment			
Full Time	33.1%	66.9%	.075
Part Time	57.1%	42.9%	
Age			
20-24	22.4%	77.6%	.001*
25-34	41.7%	58.3%	
35-44	71.4%	28.6%	
45-Older	66.7%	33.3%	
	Transfer (48.9%)	Non-Transfer (51.1%)	p
Sex			
Female	48.7%	51.3%	.923
Male	50.0%	50.0%	
Race			
Non White	52.2%	47.8%	.541
White (Non-Hispanic)	46.9%	53.1%	
Enrollment			
Full Time	45.4%	54.6%	.019*
Part Time	78.6%	21.4%	
Age			
20-24	28.9%	71.1	.000**
25-34	75.7%	24.3%	
35-44	100%	0.0%	
45-Older	66.7%	33.3%	

*$p < .05$, **$p < .001$*

T-tests, examining the relationship between the demographic variables (sex, race, and enrollment) and the outcome variables (dependent variables) revealed only one statistically

significant relationship -- that between sex and ‘Student with University’ engagement, male (n=16, M=12.44, SD=3.31) and female (n=118, M=14.39, SD=3.53), t(132) = -2.09, p = .039. t Female students had statistically significant, higher mean engagement scores compared to their male counterparts in the ‘Student with University’ engagement type. Additionally, an ANOVA examining the relationship between age and the outcome variables was conducted, revealing no statistically significant relationships (See table 4.7).

Table 4.7. Relationship between demographics and four dependent variables- independent samples t-test

Relationship between demographics and four dependent variables- independent samples t-test

			Peer to Peer			
	N	M	SD	*t*	df	p
Sex						
Male	16	24.88	5.80	-1.21	132	.227
Female	118	26.38	4.498			
Race						
Non White	70	26.36	4.48	-.264	132	.792
White (Non-Hispanic)	64	26.14	4.93			
Enrollment						
Full-Time	120	26.31	4.73	-.551	132	.583
Part-Time	14	25.58	4.42			

Age				F	df	p
20-24	77	26.79	4.30	1.325	3	.269
25-34	37	25.66	5.67			
35-44	7	23.73	3.56			
45 or older	12	25.49	3.96			
			Student with Faculty			
	N	M	SD	*t*	df	p
Sex						
Male	16	15.06	4.33	-1.57	132	.119
Female	118	16.71	3.89			
Race						
Non White	70	16.47	3.90	.089	132	.929
White (Non-Hispanic)	64	16.53	4.04			
Enrollment						
Full-Time	120	16.37	3.97	1.20	132	.233
Part-Time	14	17.72	3.85			

Age				F	df	p
20-24	77	16.73	3.90	.267	3	.849
25-34	37	16.47	4.35			
35-44	7	15.96	3.04			
45 or older	12	15.75	3.68			

	Student with University					
	N	M	SD	*t*	df	p
Sex						
Male	16	12.44	3.31	-2.09	132	.039*
Female	118	14.39	3.53			
Race						
Non White	70	14.37	3.76	-.688	132	.493
White (Non-Hispanic)	64	13.95	3.33			
Enrollment						
Full-Time	120	13.99	3.51	1.58	132	.116
Part-Time	14	15.57	3.74			

Age				F	df	p
20-24	77	14.39	3.14	.646	3	.587
25-34	37	14.22	3.74			
35-44	7	13.57	4.28			
45 or older	12	12.93	5.09			
	Student with Profession					
	N	M	SD	*t*	df	p
Sex						
Male	16	16.81	3.02	-1.28	132	.204
Female	118	17.70	2.55			
Race						
Non White	70	17.55	2.56	.096	132	.924
White (Non-Hispanic)	64	17.59	2.68			
Enrollment						
Full-Time	120	17.59	2.67	.172	132	.864
Part-Time	14	17.71	2.09			

Age				F	df	p
20-24	77	17.72	2.59	.420	3	.739
25-34	37	17.52	2.50			
35-44	7	16.57	2.64			
45 or older	12	17.58	3.29			

Note. N = 133. Sample size, mean, standard deviation, t-score, degrees of freedom, and p value were reported for all t-test demographic data with the exception of the age. An ANOVA was conducted on age and reported with an F statistic.

**p <.05*

Engagement Differences among At-Risk Students

Following these preliminary analyses, the second research question "What are the differences among at-risk students in each of the four engagement types?" The researcher posed three hypotheses: (a) First Generation College Students (FGCS) have less engagement in all four student engagement types than do their non-FGCS counterparts, (b) Transfer students have less engagement in all four student engagement types than do their non-FGCS counterparts, and (c) Military students from institutions that are classified as being "military friendly" have as much peer to peer engagement and student engagement with university as do their non-military counterparts.

First Generation College Students

To test the first hypotheses among at-risk students and using both definitions of FGCS status ('Narrow Definition' and 'Expanded Definition') discussed in Chapter Three, a series of independent-samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare the levels of student engagement between FGCS and non-FGCS using a significance level of .05.

Using the 'Narrow Definition' (parent[s] of a student who have no more than a high school diploma), there was no statistically, significant difference between levels of engagement among FGCS and non-FGCS in all four student engagement types (Peer to Peer, Student with Faculty, Student with University, and Student with Profession) (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. FGCS Narrow Definition independent t-test

FGCS Narrow Definition independent t-test

	FGCS			Non-FGCS					
Engagement Domain	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Peer to Peer	28	25.14	5.01	105	26.41	4.52	1.29	131	.200
Student with Faculty	28	16.04	3.92	105	16.62	3.99	.68	131	.495
Student with University	27	14.00	4.21	105	14.15	3.36	.21	131	.836
Student with Profession	28	16.84	2.74	105	17.77	2.56	1.68	131	.095

*p<.05

Using the 'Expanded Definition' (parent[s] of a student who may have had some college education or less but did not complete a degree), there were significant differences between levels of engagement among FGCS and non-FGCS in three of the four student engagement domains, Peer to Peer, FGCS (n=47, M=24.75, SD=4.40) and non-FGCS (n=86, M=26.91, SD=4.61), t(131)=2.62, p = .010, Student with Faculty, FGCS (n=47, M=15.48, SD=3.69) and non-FGCS (n=86, M=17.05, SD=4.03), t(131)=2.20, p = .029, and Student with Profession, FGCS (n=47, M=16.94, SD=2.50) and non-FGCS (n=86, M=17.92, SD=2.62), t(131)=2.11, p = .037. The data suggests that using the 'Expanded Definition', FGCS have less mean engagement scores than their non-FGCS counterparts in three out of the four types of college student engagement. Lastly, there was no statistically, significant difference between mean level scores of engagement among FGCS and non-FGCS in the 'Student with University Engagement" domain (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9.FGCS Expanded Definition independent t-test

FGCS Expanded Definition independent t-test

	FGCS			Non-FGCS					
Engagement Domain	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Peer to Peer	47	24.75	4.40	86	26.91	4.61	2.62	131	.010*
Student with Faculty	47	15.48	3.69	86	17.05	4.03	2.20	131	.029*
Student with University	46	14.13	4.14	86	14.12	3.19	-.01	131	.990
Student with Profession	47	16.94	2.50	86	17.92	2.62	2.11	131	.037*

*p<.05

Transfer Students

To test the hypothesis that transfer students have less engagement in all four student engagement types than do their non-FGCS counterparts, additional independent *t*-test were conducted. There was no significant difference between mean scores of engagement among transfer students and non-transfer students in all four types of student engagement (Peer to Peer, Student with Faculty, and Student with University, and Student with Profession). While the scores are less for transfer students, the results indicate there is no statistically significant difference in levels of student engagement among transfer students and their non-transfer student counterparts (see table 4.11).

Table 4.10. Transfer Student Engagement Comparison t-test

Transfer Student Engagement Comparison

	Transfer Student			Not-Transfer Student					
Engagement Domain	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Peer to Peer	66	25.59	4.90	68	26.53	4.36	1.71	132	.243
Student with Faculty	66	16.08	3.75	68	16.76	4.07	1.02	132	.311
Student with University	66	13.89	3.92	67	14.33	3.24	.695	125.84	.488
Student with Profession	66	17.39	2.65	68	17.44	2.79	.100	132	.920

*p<.05

Military Students

As previously stated, due to extremely low military student numbers (n=5), no bivariate statistical analyses were conducted.

Multivariate

Prior to considering the multivariate analysis, a test for assumptions examining outliers, normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity, was conducted. After utilizing stem leafs, histograms, and box plots, no extreme outliers were detected. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to test for normality on all four dependent variables, Peer to Peer, Student with Faculty, Student with University, and Student with Profession. There were challenges assuming normality with the Student with Profession type engagement.

Although no bivariate relationships between demographics and three of the engagement measures (Peer to Peer, Student with Faculty, and Student with Profession) were revealed, multivariate analyses, in the form of hierarchical and logistic regressions were performed, attempting to identify a model that would provide additional, perhaps hidden, explanations about the relationship between group membership and student engagement that were not apparent in the bivariate analysis. However, these models did not reveal any new information. Therefore, bivariate analysis were considered to be an adequate and appropriate approach to understanding relationships between risk factors and engagement. No further multivariate analyses were run.

Chapter Five

Discussion

This study begins to fill the gap in the literature and form a foundation for future research in the area of student engagement in social work education; particularly, engagement with students identified or labeled at-risk in BSW programs. Chapter Five begins with a study overview followed by a discussion of findings in relation to the conceptual model as presented in Chapter Two. Answering the study questions, a discussion about the methodological limitations of this study, implications for future practice and research, and a conclusion are discussed in this chapter.

Study Overview

The aim of this study was to examine student engagement in BSW students, specifically among at-risk student groups. Despite much attention focused on student engagement in general student populations at colleges and universities (Kuh, 2009[2]; Kuh, 2007; & Kuh, 2002), there are currently no empirical studies that examine this phenomena within undergraduate social work programs. Quality undergraduate education is made up of engaged students; students who engage in their classes, with their peers, faculty, institutional entities, as well as with discipline specific professional organizations (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). This study provided a foundation from which to better understand how at-risk social work students engage in order to inform social work schools/departments of ways to improve BSW student educational experiences. Additionally, this study begins to fill the gap in the literature by identifying four types of BSW student engagement, anchored in or derived from social capital theory (SCT), which can be empirically studied and reliably used to measure different types of student

engagement: Peer to Peer Engagement, Student with Faculty Engagement, Student with University Engagement, and Student with Profession Engagement.

This study was done using a cross-sectional research design using a sample of senior social work students from five Bachelor of Social Work programs (BSW) in one southeast state. The conceptual model posited relationships among student demographics (sex, age, race/ethnicity, and enrollment status), at-risk groups (first generation college students, transfer students, and military students), and four types of student engagement (peer to peer, student with faculty, student with university, and student with profession). The model was informed by two theories, systems theory and social capital theory. Social Capital Theory helped to identify and partialize the different types of student engagement while General Systems Theory helped predict that there would be relationships among four types of student engagement.

Discussion of Findings

Conceptualizing Student Engagement

This conceptualization of student engagement as four distinct but interrelated types of student engagement was a strength of the study and was supported by the findings. Social Capital Theory (SCT) guided the approach to understanding and identifying different ways that students engage (with their peers, faculty, university and with the profession) through bonding, bridging, and linking activities. SCT suggests that students who engage with their peers through cooperative and trusting relationships are building bonding capital through activities such as class discussions, collaborative learning, tutoring other students, and/or important in/out of class discussions. Students who engage with various faculty are building bridging capital through activities such as discussing performance and grades, ideas and topics introduced in class,

receiving career advice, and feedback on papers and assignments. Students who engage within the university community are building linking capital by receiving support to succeed academically and thrive socially, helping cope with non-academic responsibilities, attending campus events and activities, and encouraging contact among diverse populations. Lastly, students who engage with the profession are building a combination of both bridging and linking capital in the classroom and field activities surrounding the development of a personal code of ethics, acquiring job related skills and knowledge, and contributing to the welfare of student's community.

Building upon the original conceptualization of the NSSE, three types of student engagement (peer to peer, student to faculty, and student to university) were found to have respectable to very good measurement reliability which was increased by the addition of 1 to 3 items in each engagement type. The additional items were added to the different types of student engagement based on key learning expectations that take place through students' field education experiences, or what is referred to as social work's "signature pedagogy" (Holden, Barker, Rosenberg, Kuppens, & Ferrell, 2011; Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010). Keeping the additional items as part of these three engagement types would be recommended for future studies in social work when using the NSSE survey.

Because there was no conceptual definition of Student with Professional Engagement in the NSSE, the researcher developed a conceptual definition based on the literature (Holden, Barker, Rosenberg, Kuppens, & Ferrell, 2011; Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010; Council on Social Work Education, 2008; & Griswold, 2014); time and effort associated with activities and professional development that students engage in, inside and outside of the classroom and

through field education, to be measured by six NSSE items. While the NSSE questions that the researcher identified for this engagement type had strong internal consistency, there was very little variation in engagement levels within the profession in this sample of students. This could be explained due to the highly structured experiences that occur in field education, guided by carefully planned out learning goals set for students in their internship placements in which all students are required to participate.

Additionally, many students that participated in this survey already completed half of their senior year in their field placement and some even had additional field experience from a junior field placement. The fact that most students in this sample had prior experience in this engagement type might account for the clustering of high scores in this measure. However, to better measure engagement with the profession, there needs to be further exploration of additional items that could better represent key "professional behaviors" that are requisite for professional practice and outlined by the Council on Social Work Education's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) and are central to all BSW students' engagement in curricular programming (Council on Social Work Education, 2008). Consequently, once this type of engagement is fully developed, it may have application for other professional disciplines such as nursing, education, or medicine.

Answering the Study Questions

This study was guided by three questions, which derive from the conceptual model outlined in Chapter Two (see figure 2.1): (a) Is there a relationship between the different types of student engagement? (b) What are the differences in student engagement for each of the at-risk groups? and (c) To what extent does membership in at-risk groups predict student engagement?

Question One: Student Engagement Relationships

The first research question in this study was "Is there a relationship between the different types of student engagement?" This question was answered by conducting a Pearson correlation coefficient analysis with the four types of student engagement. The results of the analysis suggested positive, moderate to strong, statistically significant relationships between all pairs of student engagement measures. The strongest relationship in this sample occurred between the Peer to Peer Engagement and Student with Faculty Engagement and the weakest relationship occurred between Student with Faculty Engagement and Student with Profession Engagement. Stated another way, students who reported more Peer to Peer Engagement also reported more Student with Faculty Engagement as well. With all pairs of student engagement measures, as one type of student engagement increased so did the corresponding engagement type, suggesting that BSW seniors in this sample were engaged across the board in many areas of their college life.

The findings from this study suggested that GST was a useful theory or scaffolding to understand how all four types of engagement interacted in important ways with BSW students in this sample. It further suggests that students who live and learn in these university systems from which this sample was drawn, engage with these individual system parts in different ways, and although their engagement with peers, faculty, and larger university systems is related, students nonetheless have different engagement experiences with the different individual subsystems (Turner, 2011). Each of the four types of student engagement contributed a different piece of the overall engagement picture that made up a student's college experience and contributed to the totality of a student's experience.

Question Two: At-risk Students and Engagement

The second research question posed in this study was "What are the differences in student engagement for each of the at-risk groups"? Two preliminary analyses were conducted prior to answering this question, (a) refinement of the definition of FGCS and (b) examination of the relationship between student demographics and at-risk student groups.

Refining the definition of First Generation College Students

There is not one agreed upon definition in the literature of what constitutes FGCS. Choy (2001) refers to FGCS as a student from a family where neither parent had more than a high school education. Pike and Kuh (2005) refer to FGCS as a student from a family where neither parent has a bachelor degree. The researcher chose to define FGCS as a student from a family whose parents may have experienced some college education (community college or four year university) but did not earn a degree. This 'expanded definition' provided a better analytical measure, in that there was more variation. This definition takes into account if either or both of a student's parents had up to some college experience but failed to successfully earn a degree. The knowledge, which is commonly conveyed by parents to their children about what is necessary to experience college success or "cultural capital", may be lacking among FGCS as their parents may not have attended college or may lack the knowledge or necessary experiences requisite for college success (Forbus, Newbold, & Mehta, 2011). By including those students whose parents may have had some college experience but failed to earn a degree, this study would capture the influence of how that failure could have impacted engagement levels of their children.

Demographics and At-risk student groups

In this study sample, there were statistically significant relationships between race and FGCS and age and FGCS. This suggests a greater percentage of non-White students and "non-traditionally aged students" (35 years and older) in the FGCS groups than would be expected. These results corroborate what the literature indicates about FGCS, that demographically they are more likely to be older and non-white (Petty, 2014; Soriaa and Stebleton, 2012; Engle 2007; Pascarella et al., 2004).

According to Swecker, Fifolt, & Searby (2013), the estimated percentage of FGCS in the U.S., using the same definition, a student whose parents may have had some college experience but did not earn a degree, is approximately 30%. The percentage of FGCS in this study sample (35.3%) exceeded the national estimated average using the researcher's definition above. While this study is not generalizable to all BSW students and programs nationally, the percentage of declared social work majors was above the estimated national average (Swecker, Fifolt, & Searby, 2013).

While work activity and living arrangements were not part of this study, FGCS tend to work part time, live off campus, and often have lower levels of academic engagement with their peers and faculty (Pascarella et al., 2004). As such, including these variables in future studies may provide a fuller understanding of FGCS college experiences. This has implications that tie back to "student success", student retention, persistence, and ultimately graduation. This knowledge can help shape the conversation about how best to establish effective programming by identifying tailored approaches to increase engagement in BSW education for all FGCS that exhibit lower levels of engagement.

Transfer Students

Transfer students were defined as students who began college at one institution and then transferred to a different college or university. In this study sample and among the student demographics, there were statistically significant relationships between enrollment and transfer status and age and transfer status. This suggests a much greater percentage of transfer students enrolled in a part time manner, than would be expected. It would be expected that students in this sample resemble those in other studies, suggesting that transfer students often work while enrolled in college courses (Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010). It is not uncommon for part time students to work while taking college courses which is often associated with less time on campus and less engagement in their college experiences (Handel & Williams, 2012; Handel, 2009).

This has important implications on understanding how transfer students engage and how programming might be adjusted to accommodate part time students. For example, BSW programs could offer face to face engagement opportunities in the evenings after conventional work hours or on the weekends. In addition, programming could extend traditional types of face to face engagement into online environments, i.e.: student Facebook pages, online peer mentoring (with flexible hours), video conferencing between students and advisors, twitter handles that provide opportunities to share information and connect students to their peers and faculty, and building online communities that facilitate opportunities for students to engage using various electronic mediums.

Additionally, a larger than expected percentage of transfer students were found to be twenty five years old or older, compared to native college students who are typically between the ages eighteen and twenty three (Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010). Older students often have other

life obligations, i.e., work and family that might also account for their part-time enrollment status. Again, extending engagement opportunities during non-traditional hours and using electronic mediums to engage students in new and innovative ways may afford BSW programs effective tools to engage transfer students who are older and enrolled in a part time manner.

At-risk Students and Engagement Types

Two of the three hypotheses associated with question two were tested: (a) FGCS have less engagement in all four student engagement types than do their non-FGCS counterparts, (b) Transfer students have less engagement in all four student engagement types than do their non-FGCS counterparts. The third hypothesis about military students from institutions that are classified as being "military friendly" having as much Peer to Peer engagement and Student University engagement as do their non-military counterparts was not tested because the response rate for military students was too low (n=5).

Hypothesis A

In this study sample and using the expanded definition for FGCS, FGCS students reported less engagement in three of the four student engagement types, Peer to Peer, Student with Faculty, and Student with Profession than did their non-FGCS classmates. These findings are consistent with other studies that suggest that FGCS are less likely to develop strong relationships with their peers and faculty than their non-FGCS counterparts (Pike & Kuh, 2005; Soria & Stebleton 2012; Lundberg, Schreiner, Hovaguimian, & Miller 2007).

For example, Peer to Peer Engagement is associated with engagement requiring students to be available to meet outside of scheduled class time to study, do group work, discuss ideas from class readings, or to be engaged in community based projects (NSSE, 2011). Some FGCS

may not have been exposed to or recognize the importance of connecting and networking with other students or did not have the "cultural capital" from their parents to understand this to be a vital part of the college culture, necessary for student success.

In the Student with Faculty Engagement type, FGCS in this sample spent less time interacting with faculty members and engaged less in the activities associated with this engagement type such as talking about career plans, discussing ideas or readings from class, outside of class, or worked with faculty members on identified research projects than their non-FGCS counterparts. This is consistent with the literature that suggests that FGCS tend to be less engaged in the academic experiences that foster success in activities such as interacting with faculty, participating in extracurricular activities, and using support services (Engle & Tinto, 2007; Pike & Kuh, 2005). While purely speculative and only based on the researchers own observations and student engaged experiences, this may be associated with students assuming that there is little value in these types of activities and relationships and/or that FGCS may be intimidated by approaching faculty members through individual meetings, advising interactions, discussing assignments and grades, or even asking questions in class.

Lastly, in the Student with Profession Engagement type, student's levels of engagement were not normally distributed. There was very little variation in this measure, with most of the scores at the high end of the scale. It was not a surprise to find less variation in this measure compared to the other types of engagement because field education is a required component for all students in BSW programs during their senior year. This type of student engagement was measured by engagement activities such as acquiring job or work related knowledge and skills, contributing to the welfare of community, developing a personal code of ethics, or other

activities which are intended to be an integral part of field education experiences for all students in their senior year.

Hypothesis B

In this study sample, almost half of all students (49.3%) were classified as transfer students. However, there were no statistically significant differences in any of the four types of student engagement between transfer students and their non-transfer student counterparts. This was a surprising finding given what is discussed in the literature about the struggles that many transfer students face moving into four year colleges and universities (Fauria & Fuller, 2015; Fauria & Slate, 2014; Handel & Williams, 2012). While surprising, the finding suggests that transfer students in this sample of BSW seniors were engaging at similar levels as non-transfer students in all four types of engagement, which is very good news.

The researcher has two possible explanations for this finding. First, the schools/departments of social work in this sample were small compared to larger programs that exist in the humanities and sciences (i.e.: psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc…). As such, these BSW programs may have facilitated more opportunities for all students to learn through hands on role play activities, small and large classroom discussions, and student group exchanges requiring critical thinking and ethical decision making, typical of undergraduate social work programs. These exchanges provide a direct interface between students and their peers and students and their faculty members which could act as a "protective" factor, offsetting some of the known engagement challenges that many transfer students face. Because there is no known literature that examines this possible explanation, the researcher cannot compare this study's finding to other studies. This may be an area for future studies.

Second, the students who participated in this this study were BSW seniors. By the time they completed this survey, many transfer students were fully assimilated into their programs and successfully adopted their new academic and cultural expectations requisite for "student success". This poses interesting questions for future research. For example, "What might we learn from sophomore and junior transfer students regarding their student engagement?" or "Is there a relationship between non-persistence/dropout rates and transfer student's levels of engagement?"

Hypothesis C

Due to insufficient numbers of students who identified themselves as 'military students' (n=5), no analysis was run using this at-risk student population.

Question Three: Group Membership and Engagement

In attempt to examine whether membership in an at-risk group(s) predicted engagement, multivariate analyses, in the form of hierarchical and logistic regression were performed. When examining the relationship between the demographic variables and the four types of student engagement, there were no statistically significant relationships with the exception of sex and the Student with University Engagement type. This suggests that female students had statistically significant, higher mean engagement scores compared to their male counterparts in the Student with University Engagement type. Additionally, an ANOVA analysis, examining the relationship between age and the four types of student engagement, was conducted revealing no statistically significant relationships.

Methodological Limitations

Although this study provides important information on understanding how two groups of at-risk social work students, FGCS and transfer students in five BSW programs in one southeast state, engaged in various types of student engagement, several limitations exist. First, the total sample (N=135) was very low and the distribution of survey participants from each of the five BSW programs were not proportionally represented, with one institution having had the majority of students who participated in this study. Additionally, while there were areas and levels of student engagement among FGCS that were statistically significant compared to their non-FGCS counterparts, the practical implications may not have been as significant. This is important for the researcher to be mindful of so not to overstate the practical implications of the findings.

Measurement Limitations

While using the NSSE survey to measure three out of the four engagement types (Peer to Peer, Student with Faculty, and Student with University) was a strength, supported by previous studies using the NSSE (Popkess & McDaniel, 2014; Hatch, 2012; Beachboard, Beachboard, Li, & Adkison, 2011; Kuh, 2001, 2002, 2009[2]) , it was a challenge when creating the "Student with Profession" engagement type. Even though the NSSE questions were relevant to measure this type of engagement, the researcher was limited to only using the ones in the established survey.

Additional questions could be added to the ones already used in the NSSE to strengthen the Student with Profession type of engagement. There may be other questions related to student's professional experiences and engagement; for example, "I am able to use self-reflection in my work with clients", "I am able to connect my classroom learning into my practice with clients in my internship", " My internship experiences are preparing me for professional practice

after graduation", or "I am able to effectively navigate through ethical dilemmas in my internship similar to ones that have been discussed in my classes".

Additionally, the secondary data set used in this study was limited to survey questions that quantitatively measured student engagement activities which did not afford the researcher the ability to inquire about other important and compelling questions that may have provided more of a rich description of the student engagement experience, especially for students identified as FGCS. Adding a qualitative component to this study could have provided a richer dimensionality to the understanding of the student experience by including questions that inquired about FGCS experiences among the various types of student engagement. Examples could have included open ended questions such as "what types of engagement that you participated in assisted you with your studies at this institution?", "what types of interactions with peers, faculty, university, and profession would have been helpful to you?", or "are there types of engagement that you feel your institution should be more mindful of when engaging with students?".

Design Limitations

Using a cross-sectional design, this study was limited to examining student engagement at one point in time and did not examine a student's progress from entry until graduation. It would be important to conduct a longitudinal, panel study of newly admitted students, freshman and transfer, over the course of their time in a BSW program to understand change over time. This would afford the researcher the opportunity to study the levels and types of student engagement among at-risk students at different points in time (freshman, sophomore, junior, and

senior years) to see if they change. There is no current literature that reflects an annual examination of student engagement from entry until graduation.

By examining student engagement annually and over time, the researcher would be able to determine when some at-risk students experience lower levels of engagement. For example, there may be adjustment challenges for transfer students that impact how they engage in their new university and program of study based on cultural and academic shifts (Handle & Williams, 2012). As such, it is reasonable to consider that some transfer students drop out prior to reaching their senior year (Handle, 2009). This study's findings support the speculation that those transfer students who successfully made it to their senior year and participated in this survey were able to adjust to the new culture and academic expectations of the new institutions. However, other transfer students may not have been able to adapt to the new institutional and program changes and dropped out of college. The experiences of these students was not captured in this survey. Having all levels of student engagement data over time would provide a more comprehensive examination of a student's engagement trajectory and provide BSW programs the information to appropriately shift programming to facilitate increased engagement during specific times of low student engagement.

Lastly, because this sample only contained five BSW accredited programs from one southeastern state in the U.S., the results were not generalizable to BSW programs nationally. The study population sample was not representative of all BSW students and programs in the United States and therefore only represented the five participating programs.

Research and Practice Implications

Research Implications

This study begins to address the gap in the literature regarding undergraduate social work education by identifying four preliminary types of BSW engagement that can be empirically studied and reliable for use in future BSW engagement studies. This study provided a foundation from which to build onto the already strong measures of Peer to Peer Engagement, Student with Faculty Engagement, and Student with University Engagement developed by the NSSE and successfully adapted by this researcher. These three types of student engagement represent good measures of student engagement (Kuh, 2009[2]) and should be considered for future studies related to BSW student engagement.

However, as previously discussed, the levels of Student with Professional Engagement in this sample were not normally distributed and displayed a negative skew (see Figure 4.4). Again, this could be attributed to the fact that the survey was completed during BSW student's senior year, in which field educational experiences are required components in all BSW programs. It may also be skewed due to how the items in this scale may not have captured what the Council on Social Work Education states is central to students' professional learning in the field; "…to socialize students to perform the role of practitioner- connect and integrate theory and practice" (Council on Social Work Education, 2008, p.8). The development of additional questions to the items that the researcher used to measure this engagement type would add to a fuller representation of the Student with Profession Engagement measurement and would be recommended prior to its use in future studies.

Practice Implications

The important implications about these findings were how the four types of engagement have application in BSW programs that occur through activities associated with social capital theory, bonding, bridging, and linking interactions. In practical terms, when students experience Peer to Peer Engagement, they often form bonding interactions that are based on trust and cooperative relationships with other students who see themselves as having a similar social identity (Dika, 2012). This type of engagement creates an atmosphere that often facilitates positive interactions that take the form of class discussions, collaborative learning, tutoring other students, and/or important in/out of class discussions where student differences are shared and learned from (NSSE, 2011). While this study did not measure levels of trusting relationships, many of the above mentioned activities within this this engagement type were closely associated with students forming trusting relationships with other students.

Given the findings about FGCS, that they have lower levels of Peer to Peer Engagement than their non-FGCS counterparts, schools/programs of social work can be purposeful in creating programming that encourages peer to peer interaction, assisting FGCS becoming acculturated to important engagement that contributes to their persistence and college success. For example, peer mentoring programs designed to guide professional and personal development, self-efficacy, and resourcefulness (Wang, 2012) are key. They can assist many FGCS that may not have the level of cultural capital necessary to understand what is expected of them by colleges and universities. Specifically, FGCS may benefit most from this engagement if they are assigned to a peer mentor who is also a FGCS. The purposeful exchanges and interactions can assist new FGCS form a healthy foundation necessary for them to become integrated and thrive in their new college environment. Additional activities like supplemental instruction sessions lead by junior

or senior students to facilitate peer learning (Dawson, van der Meer, Skalicky, & Cowley, 2014) or social work student organizations designed to engage students in on-campus and community based activities using a peer to peer engagement model designed to foster social integration (Lundberg, 2014) are examples of what BSW programs can employ programmatically, to address low levels of Peer to Peer Student Engagement, especially among FGCS.

When students experience Student with Faculty Engagement, they often create bridging interactions that occur between students and various faculty members. By its very nature, these interactions occur across social divisions, like social identity, that students can benefit from (Sreter & Woolcock, 2004; Putnam, 2000). For example, when students interact with faculty members, they should be able to discuss important learning opportunities through activities like feedback on papers and assignments, discuss performance and grades, discuss ideas and topics that are introduced in class, receive important career advice, or even participate in student/faculty research activities (NSSE, 2011).

In this study and as previously discussed, FGCS had statistically significant, lower engagement scores in the Student with Faculty Engagement type than their non-FGCS counterparts. Given the above mentioned activities associated with this engagement type, BSW programs can be purposeful in creating programming that encourages student's engagement with faculty. For example, having specific course offerings where faculty work with FGCS to build the vital cultural capital necessary for successful persistence and graduation is essential. These courses are often one credit, introduction to university style classes that focus on important skill sets necessary for college success. Specific to FGCS, courses could focus on a wide range of topics that build cultural capital; from how to approach an instructor when there are issues or

concerns in a class, how to participate or effectively create study groups with other students to prepare for course exams, papers, or group projects, to how to understanding, navigate, and access important university resources like records and registration, financial aid, and university counseling services. Additionally, providing incentives or requiring individual meetings with students and their faculty instructors throughout a semester to discuss grades and performance on assignments and class activities is a relatively simple way to increase student faculty engagement.

Other ideas include encouraging and supporting the opportunity for FGCS to learn about and conduct research with faculty members who have similar research interests (Thompkins, Rogers, & Cohen, 2009) and to have academic advisors encourage FGCS to approach and engage faculty in appropriate ways that they may not be aware of or comfortably initiating (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). While these suggestions do not represent a comprehensive list of activities that BSW programs can use to induce student and faculty engagement, they do provide a starting point for programs to begin to create purposeful programming so that FGCS can be become familiar with the ways that social work programs expect them to engage with faculty.

When students experience Student with University Engagement, they create linking interactions that are derived out of relationships with communities and institutions that have relative power over them (Hawkins & Maurer, 2012). University environments have many entities that often influence and impact students. For example, career services provide important access to resume writing workshops, post-graduation job information, or other types of important pre-professional development. In addition, students benefit from academic and social supports that are created by various university offices and programs through campus workshops, events,

speakers, or cultural events. Students in this study demonstrated moderate engagement scores in this engagement type. Both transfer students and FGCS had no statistically significant differences in engagement scores compared to their non-transfer and non-FGCS counterparts, suggesting that the five BSW programs in this study were doing well with the Student with University Engagement type. While this type of engagement may vary from institution to institution, some programs may need to create specific programming that will address lower engagement scores.

Lastly, when students experience Student with Profession Engagement, a combination of both bridging and linking activities are associated with these types of experiences. Students in this engagement type are exposed to important formal and informal professional networks that afford unique access to professionals in the field, job opportunities, or post-graduation experiences that may not have been available to them without the benefit of the networked relationship (Hawkins and Maurer, 2012; Putnam, 2000). Again, this engagement type requires further development prior to its use in future studies.

Based on the results of this study, FGCS had statistically significant, lower engagement scores than their non-FGCS counterparts in Student with Profession Engagement type. These findings suggest that levels of key engagement activities are lower for FGCS. With field education being the 'signature pedagogy' (Holden, Barker, Rosenberg, Kuppens, & Ferrell, 2011; Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010) in social work education, attention to how students are engaging in this environment is critical. Because social work programs have unique connections and networks with community partners/agencies and the knowledge that FGCS sometime lack the necessary cultural capital associated with professional engagement, they can work to connect

FGCS with job related activities and post-graduation opportunities by creating field job fairs that provide students the ability to interact with employers through informational interviewing, job interviewing, and even post-graduation volunteering. In order to prepare FGCS for success in these types of Student with Profession activities, providing preparatory orientations where professional attire and interactions are introduced and practiced. In addition, university career center programs and workshops can expose FGCS to purposeful activities that prepare them to enter the professional job market (resume and cover letter writing, interviewing skills, and job related searches) which is an important skill as student prepare to graduate and enter professional practice, especially those classified as FGCS.

Suggestions for future research

Ideas for future research suggested from this study could include:

1. The researcher could use the four engagement types to examine a longitudinal, panel study that would measure levels of student engagement for freshman and transfer students from their institutional point of entry until graduation; measuring engagement levels of all students at each classification status: freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. This would also afford the researcher the opportunity to study levels of retention and drop out trends that occur at specific points in a student's academic journey. Additionally, the researcher could add a qualitative component to the study in order to gain a richer description of the student engagement experience, especially for students identified as FGCS. It would also provide important information pertaining to the level of cultural capital FGCS have as they enter a college environment and what type of programming might be employed to assist them in their acclimation to a new post-

secondary learning environment and set them up for success. This would also provide a fuller picture of the levels of student engagement throughout a student's journey, identifying points in time where lower levels of engagement occur among certain at-risk groups of students' engagement in deficient areas.

2. To move toward a more generalizable model, representing BSW students and programs nationally, the researcher could use NSSE data sets and the four engagement types to select one BSW program from each state to include in a national sample. Working to make this a more representative sample, the researcher would consult with the Council on Social Work Education and the Association of Baccalaureate Program Directors to assist the researcher in identifying which BSW programs to include. This would afford the researcher an opportunity to gain a larger picture of BSW student engagement in the U.S

3. To be able to better understand if BSW programs act as a "protective" factor for transfer students in all four types of student engagement, the researcher would like to compare transfer student engagement among various undergraduate social work programs to transfer student engagement in other programs in the humanities and sciences (ie: psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc…) by analyzing NSSE data from various colleges and universities. This may provide insight into social work student engagement practices that may have application in other disciplines.

4. To date, this is the only study to examine BSW student engagement using NSSE data. Given the promise of the aforementioned engagement types, the researcher would be interested to study online or distance education forms of undergraduate social work

education to ascertain whether any differences in levels of engagement occur between face to face programming and hybrid and/or fully online programming.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to understand how undergraduate social work students engage in their BSW programs of study, specifically those identified as at-risk. Interest in this topic emerged from the researcher's prior experience working with BSW students in an advising capacity and further supported by the literature (Kuh, 2009[1], 2009[2]; Kuh, Kinzie, Bridges, & Hayek, 2007). While there are many variables that contribute to students being successful in their academic experiences, student engagement has emerged as one of the most important indicators tethered to student success (Hatch, 2012; Pascarella, & Terenzini 2005; Wolf-Wendal, Ward, & Kinzie 2009; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). However, not all students experience student success and those labeled at-risk, face unique engagement challenges. A large piece the student success puzzle is tied to how engaged a student is in his/her courses and programs of study; specifically how students engage with their peers, engage with faculty, with the larger university community, and also how engagement in their profession prepares them for academic and future professional success (Kuh, 2009) [2].

This study found that among the three identified at-risk student populations (transfer students, FGCS, and military students), FGCS had statistically significant, lower engagement scores in three out of the four engagement types (peer to peer, student with faculty, and student with profession) than their non-FGCS counterparts. Being that student engagement is an integral component of student success (Bulger & Watson, 2006; Campbell & Nutt, 2008; McCarthy & Kuh, 2006; Sayles & Shelton, 2005), the researcher proposed beginning suggestions on ways that

BSW programs might employ programmatic strategies to address lower engagement scores in each of the various engagement types.

In this study's findings, transfer student's engagement scores were comparable to their non-transfer counterparts in all four engagement types, suggesting that transfer students in the five BSW programs in this study had similar engagement levels of student engagement in all four engagement types as their non-transfer counterparts. Lastly, the researcher was not able to evaluate military students because the response rate for military students was too low (n=5). No analyses were conducted.

By understanding how at-risk BSW students engage, schools/departments of social work can tailor specific programming designed to increase their engagement and overall student success; with the goal of FGCS and Non FGCS having the same engagement levels in all four engagement types. BSW programs that create unique programmatic for students to engage, whether that be establishing peer mentor programs to address lower engagement scores in the Peer to Peer Engagement type, creating student and faculty research opportunities in the Student with Faculty Engagement type, or facilitating social work field/job fairs to address lower levels engagement scores in the Student with Profession Engagement type, will be better able to address the challenges that at-risk students face in BSW education, specifically FGCS.

This study is one of the first of its kind to focus solely on BSW student engagement using NSSE data. While there is needed development in the Student with Profession Engagement type and the study results were not generalizable to all BSW students and programs nationally, this research helps build a solid foundation from which to better understand how undergraduate

social work students engage and what types of engagement can be empirically studied and reliably measured.

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Appendices

Appendix A: National Center for Educational Statistics; Fast Facts

FAST FACTS

Tuition costs of colleges and universities

Question:
What are the trends in the cost of college education?

Response:

For the 2012–13 academic year, annual current dollar prices for undergraduate tuition, room, and board were estimated to be $15,022 at public institutions, $39,173 at private nonprofit institutions, and $23,158 at private for-profit institutions. Between 2002–03 and 2012–13, prices for undergraduate tuition, room, and board at public institutions rose 39 percent, and prices at private nonprofit institutions rose 27 percent, after adjustment for inflation. The price for undergraduate tuition, room, and board at private for-profit institutions decreased 7 percent between 2002–03 and 2012–13, after adjustment for inflation.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2013* (NCES 2015-011), Chapter 3.

Average total tuition, fees, room and board rates charged for full-time undergraduate students in degree-granting institutions, by type and control of institution: Selected years, 1982–83 to 2012–13

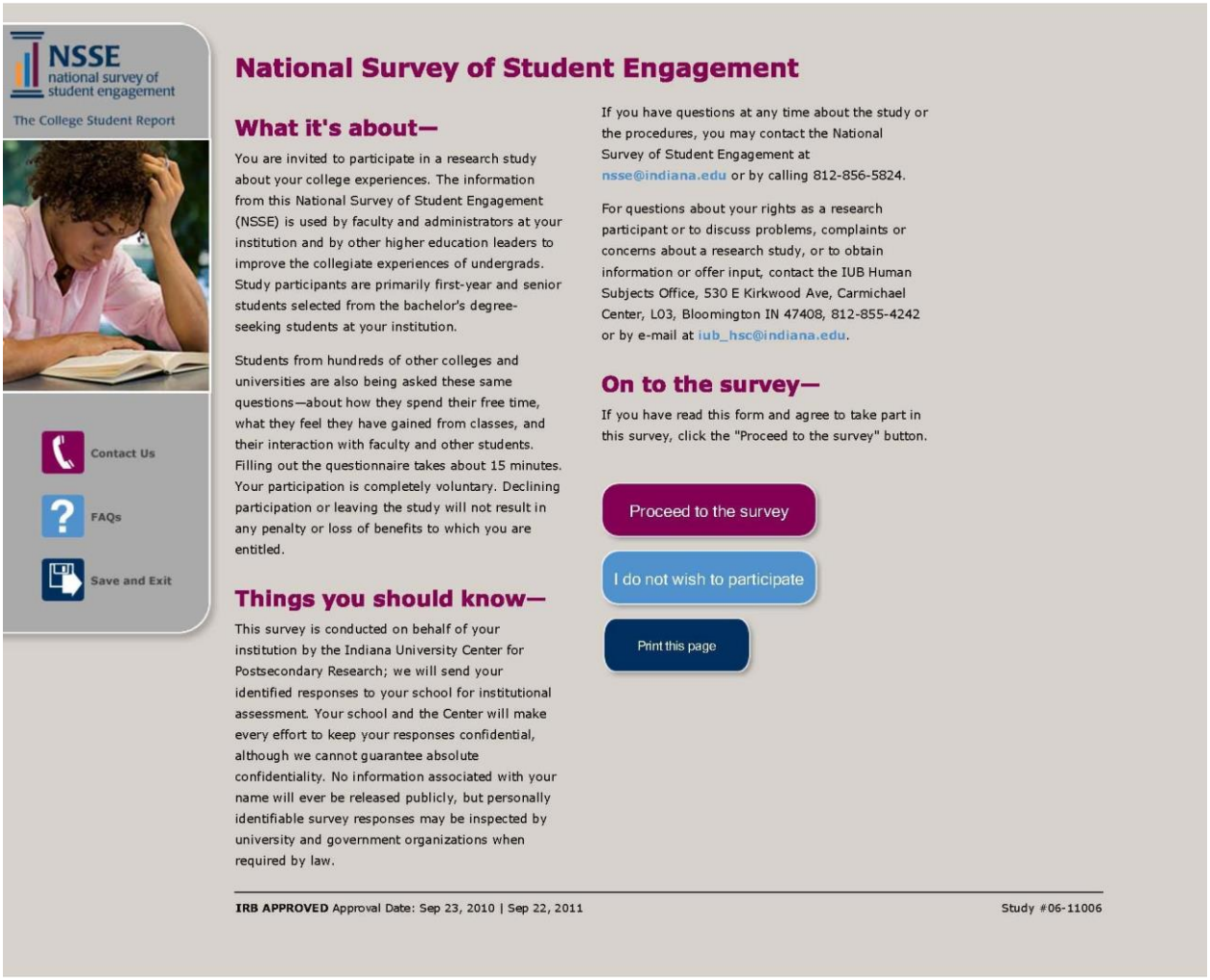
Year and control of institution	Constant 2012–13 dollars[1]			Current dollars		
	All institutions	4-year institutions	2-year institutions	All institutions	4-year institutions	2-year institutions
All institutions						
1982–83	$9,138	$10,385	$6,396	$3,877	$4,406	$2,713
1992–93	12,097	14,216	6,830	7,452	8,758	4,207
2001–02	14,775	17,708	7,424	11,380	13,639	5,718
2002–03	15,262	18,344	7,943	12,014	14,439	6,252
2003–04	16,104	19,276	8,336	12,953	15,505	6,705
2004–05	16,647	19,925	8,563	13,793	16,510	7,095
2005–06	17,014	20,289	8,412	14,634	17,451	7,236
2006–07	17,547	20,934	8,461	15,483	18,471	7,466
2007–08	17,737	21,160	8,346	16,231	19,363	7,637
2008–09	18,421	21,996	8,879	17,092	20,409	8,238
2009–10	18,839	22,515	9,109	17,649	21,093	8,533
2010–11	19,355	23,118	9,323	18,497	22,092	8,909
2011–12	19,741	23,409	9,461	19,418	23,025	9,306
2012–13	20,234	23,872	9,574	20,234	23,872	9,574
Public institutions						
1982–83	$6,941	$7,534	$5,632	$2,945	$3,196	$2,390
1992–93	8,731	9,772	6,166	5,379	6,020	3,799
2001–02	10,415	11,940	6,670	8,022	9,196	5,137
2002–03	10,800	12,434	7,116	8,502	9,787	5,601
2003–04	11,496	13,270	7,474	9,247	10,674	6,012
2004–05	11,905	13,790	7,694	9,864	11,426	6,375
2005–06	12,154	14,077	7,547	10,454	12,108	6,492
2006–07	12,522	14,503	7,723	11,049	12,797	6,815
2007–08	12,647	14,675	7,623	11,573	13,429	6,975
2008–09	13,209	15,371	8,156	12,256	14,262	7,568
2009–10	13,667	16,027	8,223	12,804	15,014	7,703
2010–11	14,194	16,657	8,460	13,564	15,918	8,085
2011–12	14,616	17,084	8,715	14,377	16,805	8,572
2012–13	15,022	17,474	8,928	15,022	17,474	8,928
Private nonprofit and for-profit institutions						
1982–83	$16,311	$16,797	$12,644	$6,920	$7,126	$5,364
1992–93	23,754	24,364	16,076	14,634	15,009	9,903
2001–02	29,100	29,727	20,547	22,413	22,896	15,825
2002–03	29,652	30,220	22,554	23,340	23,787	17,753
2003–04	30,613	31,167	24,315	24,624	25,070	19,558
2004–05	31,158	31,693	24,497	25,817	26,260	20,297
2005–06	31,284	31,778	24,885	26,908	27,333	21,404
2006–07	32,231	32,774	22,988	28,439	28,919	20,284
2007–08	32,530	33,032	23,698	29,767	30,226	21,685
2008–09	33,199	33,706	24,494	30,804	31,273	22,726
2009–10	33,116	33,612	26,134	31,023	31,488	24,483
2010–11	33,513	34,131	24,979	32,026	32,617	23,871
2011–12	33,608	34,234	24,049	33,058	33,674	23,655
2012–13	34,483	35,074	23,328	34,483	35,074	23,328

[1]Constant dollars based on the Consumer Price Index, prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, adjusted to a school-year basis.

NOTE: Data are for the entire academic year and are average total charges for full-time attendance. Tuition and fees were weighted by the number of full-time-equivalent undergarduates, but were not adjusted to reflect student residency. Room and board were based on full-time students. Data through 1995-96 are for institutions of higher education, while later data are for degree-granting institutions. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. The degree-granting classification is very similar to the earlier higher education classification, but it includes more 2-year colleges and excludes a few higher education institutions that did not grant degrees.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2015). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2013* (NCES 2015-011), Table 330.10.

Appendix B: National Survey of Student Engagement (2011)



NSSE national survey of student engagement

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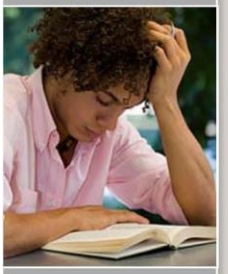

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?

	Very often	Often	Some-times	Never
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	○	○	○	○
Made a class presentation	○	○	○	○
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	○	○	○	○
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	○	○	○	○
Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments	○	○	○	○
Come to class without completing readings or assignments	○	○	○	○
Worked with other students on projects **during class**	○	○	○	○
Worked with classmates **outside of class** to prepare class assignments	○	○	○	○

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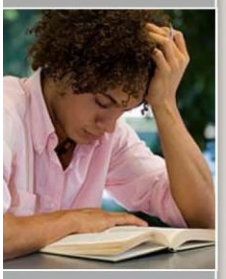

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FAQs

Save and Exit

In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?

	Very often	Often	Some-times	Never
Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions	○	○	○	○
Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	○	○	○	○
Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course	○	○	○	○
Used an electronic medium (listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	○	○	○	○
Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor	○	○	○	○
Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	○	○	○	○
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	○	○	○	○
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	○	○	○	○

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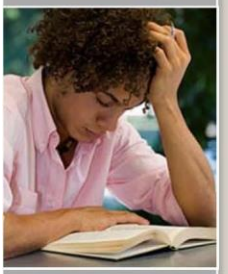

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FAQs

Save and Exit

In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?

	Very often	Often	Some-times	Never
Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance				
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations				
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)				
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)				
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own				
Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values				

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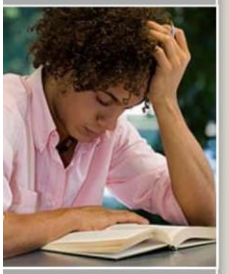

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FAQs

Save and Exit

During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities?

	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from your courses and readings so you can repeat them in pretty much the same form	○	○	○	○
Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components	○	○	○	○
Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	○	○	○	○
Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions	○	○	○	○
Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	○	○	○	○

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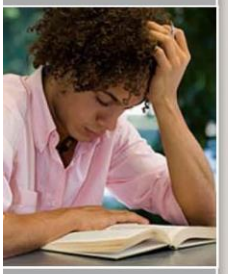

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FAQs

Save and Exit

During the current *school year*, about how much reading and writing have you done?

Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings

None | 1-4 | 5-10 | 11-20 | More than 20

Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment

None | 1-4 | 5-10 | 11-20 | More than 20

Number of written papers or reports of **20 pages or more**

None | 1-4 | 5-10 | 11-20 | More than 20

Number of written papers or reports **between 5 and 19 pages**

None | 1-4 | 5-10 | 11-20 | More than 20

Number of written papers or reports of **fewer than 5 pages**

None | 1-4 | 5-10 | 11-20 | More than 20

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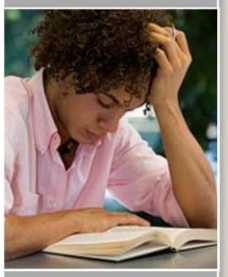

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FAQs

Save and Exit

In a *typical week*, how many homework problem sets do you complete?

	None	1-2	3-4	5-6	More than 6
Number of problem sets that take you **more** than an hour to complete	○	○	○	○	○
Number of problem sets that take you **less** than an hour to complete	○	○	○	○	○

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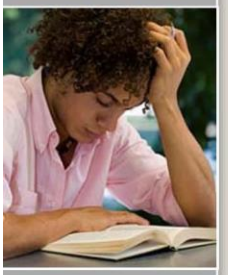

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FAQs

Save and Exit

Select the circle that best represents the extent to which your examinations during the current school year have challenged you to do your best work.

Very little						Very much
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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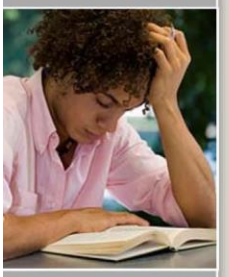

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

During the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?

	Very often	Often	Some-times	Never
Attended an art exhibit, play, dance, music, theater, or other performance	○	○	○	○
Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities	○	○	○	○
Participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.)	○	○	○	○
Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	○	○	○	○
Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective	○	○	○	○
Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	○	○	○	○

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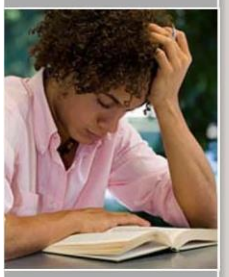

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution?

	Done	Plan to do	Do not plan to do	Have not decided
Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	○	○	○	○
Community service or volunteer work	○	○	○	○
Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together	○	○	○	○
Work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements	○	○	○	○
Foreign language coursework	○	○	○	○
Study abroad	○	○	○	○
Independent study or self-designed major	○	○	○	○
Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)	○	○	○	○

Continue

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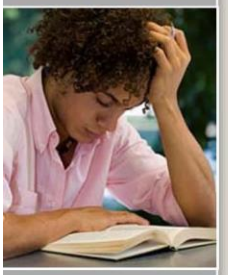
The College Student Report



Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

Select the circle that best represents the quality of your relationships with people at your institution.

Relationships with **other students**

Unfriendly, Unsupportive, Sense of alienation						**Friendly, Supportive, Sense of belonging**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Relationships with **faculty members**

Unavailable, Unhelpful, Unsympathetic						**Available, Helpful, Sympathetic**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Relationships with **administrative personnel and offices**

Unhelpful, Inconsiderate, Rigid						**Helpful, Considerate, Flexible**
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Continue

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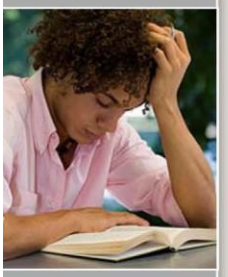

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?

Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)

0 Hours per week	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30

Working for pay **on campus**

0 Hours per week	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30

Working for pay **off campus**

0 Hours per week	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30

Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)

0 Hours per week	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30

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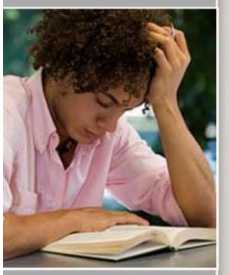

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?

Relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, etc.)

0 Hours per week	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)

0 Hours per week	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Commuting to class (driving, walking, etc.)

0 Hours per week	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Continue

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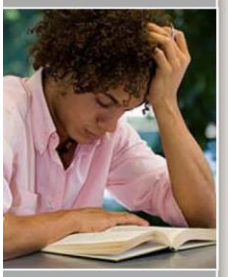

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FAQs

Save and Exit

To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following?

	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	○	○	○	○
Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically	○	○	○	○
Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	○	○	○	○
Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	○	○	○	○
Providing the support you need to thrive socially	○	○	○	○
Attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.)	○	○	○	○
Using computers in academic work	○	○	○	○

Continue

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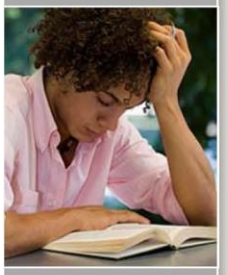

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?

	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
Acquiring a broad general education	○	○	○	○
Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	○	○	○	○
Writing clearly and effectively	○	○	○	○
Speaking clearly and effectively	○	○	○	○
Thinking critically and analytically	○	○	○	○
Analyzing quantitative problems	○	○	○	○
Using computing and information technology	○	○	○	○
Working effectively with others	○	○	○	○

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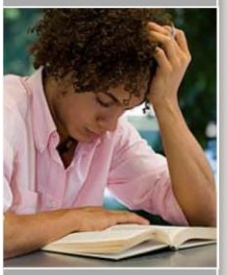

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?

	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
Voting in local, state, or national elections	○	○	○	○
Learning effectively on your own	○	○	○	○
Understanding yourself	○	○	○	○
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	○	○	○	○
Solving complex real-world problems	○	○	○	○
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	○	○	○	○
Contributing to the welfare of your community	○	○	○	○
Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	○	○	○	○

Continue

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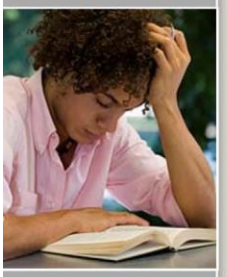

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

If you could start over again, would you go to the *same institution* you are now attending?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Probably no
- Definitely no

Continue

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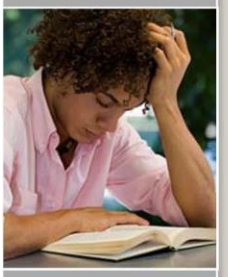

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

Select your year of birth:

- 1992
- 1991
- 1990
- 1989
- 1988
- 1987
- 1986
- 1985

If other year, enter here: 19

Your sex:

- Male
- Female

Continue

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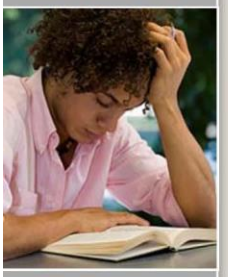

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

Are you an international student or foreign national?

- Yes
- No

What is your racial or ethnic identification? (Select only one.)

- American Indian or other Native American
- Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- White (non-Hispanic)
- Mexican or Mexican American
- Puerto Rican
- Other Hispanic or Latino
- Multiracial
- Other
- I prefer not to respond

Continue

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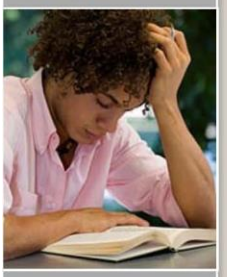

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

What is your current classification in college?

- Freshman/first-year
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Unclassified

Did you begin college at your current institution or elsewhere?

- Started here
- Started elsewhere

Since graduating from high school, which of the following types of schools have you attended other than the one you are attending now? (Select all that apply.)

- Vocational or technical school
- Community or junior college
- 4-year college other than this one
- None
- Other

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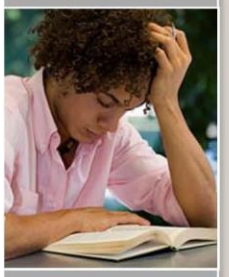

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

Are you a current or former member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard?

- (•) Yes
- ( ) No

If yes:

As part of your military experience, did you receive combat pay, hostile fire pay, or imminent danger pay?

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No

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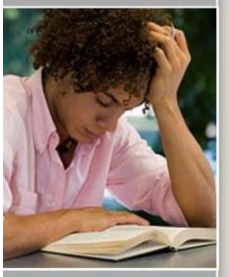

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

Thinking about this current academic term...

How would you characterize your enrollment?

- Full-time
- Less than full-time

Are you taking all courses entirely online?

- Yes
- No

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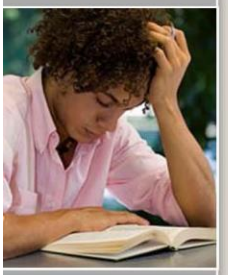

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

Your institution will not receive your identified response to the following question. Only an overall summary of responses will be provided.

Do you have any disabilities or impairments? (Select all that apply.)

- [ ] No, I do not have any disabilities or impairments
- [x] Yes, I have a sensory impairment (vision or hearing)
- [ ] Yes, I have a mobility impairment
- [ ] Yes, I have a learning disability
- [ ] Yes, I have a developmental disorder (ADHD, Autism spectrum disorder, etc.)
- [ ] Yes, I have a mental health disorder
- [ ] Yes, I have a medical disability not listed above
- [ ] Yes, I have another type of disability
- [ ] I choose not to answer

If yes: Please specify your disabilities or impairments:

Continue

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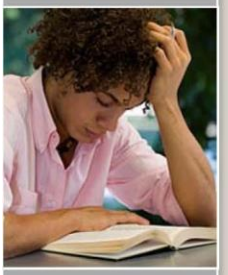

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

Are you a member of a social fraternity or sorority?

- Yes
- No

Are you a student-athlete on a team sponsored by your institution's athletics department?

- Yes
- No

On what team(s) sponsored by your institution's athletics department are you an athlete? (Select all that apply.)

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Bowling
- Cross Country
- Fencing
- Field Hockey
- Football
- Golf
- Gymnastics
- Ice Hockey
- Track & Field
- Lacrosse
- Rifle
- Rowing
- Skiing
- Soccer
- Softball
- Swimming & Diving
- Tennis
- Volleyball
- Water Polo
- Wrestling
- Other, specify:

Continue

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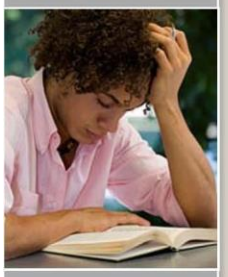

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

What have most of your grades been up to now at this institution?

- A
- A-
- B+
- B
- B-
- C+
- C
- C- or lower

Which of the following best describes where you are living now while attending college?

- Dormitory or other campus housing (not fraternity/sorority house)
- Residence (house, apartment, etc.) within **walking distance** of the institution
- Residence (house, apartment, etc.) within **driving distance** of the institution
- Fraternity or sorority house
- None of the above

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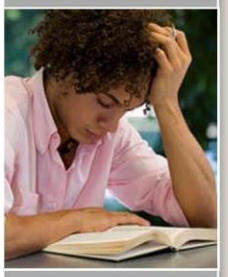

Contact Us

FAQs

Save and Exit

THANKS FOR SHARING YOUR RESPONSES!

Your responses to the survey were successfully submitted.

Questions or comments? Contact us.

For security purposes, please close your browser window to exit the survey.

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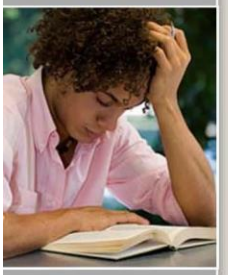

Contact Us

FAQs

Contact Us

For technical questions regarding the survey:

E-mail: help@nssesurvey.org
Phone: 1-800-676-0390
Mail: Center for Survey Research
Indiana University
Eigenmann Hall 2 South
1900 E. 10th Street
Bloomington, IN 47406-7512
USA
Link: Center for Survey Research Home Page

For general NSSE issues:

E-mail: nsse@indiana.edu
Mail: Center for Postsecondary Research
Indiana University Bloomington
1900 East 10th Street
Eigenmann Hall Suite 419
Bloomington, IN 47406-7512
Link: The National Survey of Student Engagement

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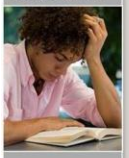

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FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

Survey Details

- What is the National Survey of Student Engagement?

Survey Administration

- How did you get my name?

Data Reporting

- What will you do with the data?
- Will my answers be shared with the institution?
- Are you only surveying my university or college?
- Are my survey responses anonymous?
- Are my survey responses confidential?

Reasons to Participate

- Why should I complete the survey?
- I get surveyed all the time. How is this survey different?
- Who is in charge of the survey?

What is the National Survey of Student Engagement?

The National Survey of Student Engagement, or NSSE (pronounced Nessie), is a survey specially designed for students like you to provide information about your undergraduate experience, including your views about the quality of your education and how you spend your time. The survey has a very broad scope in that your institution is one of more than 750 universities and colleges from around the United States and Canada using the survey this spring. But the main reason your institution is participating is that it wants to learn more about what students think and do because it wants to improve the undergraduate program at your institution.

This year more than 2,000,000 students will be invited to express their views and describe their experiences.

Return to top

How did you get my name?

When your university or college got involved in this project it gave us a file with the names and mailing addresses of all first-year students and seniors. They may have also chosen to survey sophomores and juniors. At some institutions all students are selected to receive the survey, while at others a random sample is drawn.

Return to top

What will you do with the data?

We will present data to your institution in an *Institutional Report* that summarizes the responses from all students who completed the survey at your institution. This report includes a data file that your institution can use to examine the information in different ways; examples might include comparing the experiences of women and men or learning about the experiences of students in different major fields.

In addition, your institution's data will be combined with data from students in the US and Canada to generate an overall profile of the undergraduate student. This data set will be used to conduct research to improve undergraduate education. Individual student responses are not identifiable in any reports.

Return to top

Will my answers be shared with the institution?

Absolutely. One of the most important reasons to do this survey is so that your institution discovers what you and other students at your institution do and think. Campus officials want to create positive change based on the real experiences of students. By understanding better how students are spending time in and out of the classroom your campus gets the opportunity to understand where your educational needs are being met and where more resources need to be allocated.

Return to top

Are you only surveying my university or college?

In spring 2011, more than 750 universities or colleges will be involved in the survey. This is an annual study, so the information you provide now will become part of the national database and be used for some time to come as people compare your responses with students in the future.

Return to top

Are my survey responses anonymous?

No. When we send the final survey data file to your institution, your responses will be linked to the unique ID number your institution provided us. In some cases this number will be your institutional student ID number, while in other cases they may assign a number specific to this study. NSSE never uses Social Security numbers for identification. We will never share your contact information or survey responses that identify you with anyone other than your institution.

Note: some provinces in Canada prohibit by law the release of student identifiable information and thus student survey responses are anonymous for some Canadian institutions. If you are a Canadian student and wish to know more about whether your responses are anonymous, please contact the campus official named in the email message you received.

Return to top

Are my survey responses confidential?

Yes. Confidentiality of student data is a high priority at NSSE. NSSE will only release survey responses identified by student to the institution at which that student is enrolled, and even then only to personnel designated as our official contacts at that institution.

In the United States, our use of student data is regulated by the U.S. federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34CFR 99.31(a)6(i)), which allows educational institutions to share student data with outside agencies conducting research for the purpose of improving instruction. For the full text of FERPA: http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/finrule/2008-4/120908a.pdf.

In Canada, use of student information is regulated by federal and provincial guidelines. Students should contact their own institution for information about institutional policies for protecting student records.

Return to top

Why should I complete the survey?

Simply put, your institution needs to know what you think of your educational experience, the kinds of activities you do, and how you are benefiting from your studies. Without this information, it's not very easy for faculty and staff at your institution to identify the areas that can and should be improved. The more your institution knows about its students and what they do there, the more likely it is that faculty, academic and student life administrators and others can take appropriate action that will improve undergraduate education.

Return to top

I get surveyed all the time. How is this survey different?

Have you heard the expression, "think globally, act locally?" This is an international project with immediate local implications. That is, more than two million students around the United States and thousands of students in Canada are getting the same survey. And people will be interested in what undergraduate students as a group think about their education. But it's also important that your institution learns about your experience directly from you and then shares what it learns through comparisons to other universities and colleges. This will give your faculty and administrators an answer to the question: "How well are we doing?"

Finally, this survey differs from most others you get because what you say will become part of a continuing national study in the United States and Canada that people at your institution as well as hundreds of other universities and colleges will continue to use for the foreseeable future. So, your answers will not only help your institution, but many others as well.

Return to top

Who is in charge of the survey?

The project is located at Indiana University Bloomington and is directed by Alexander C. McCormick, a faculty member in the School of Education. The Center for Survey Research at IUB, directed by John Kennedy, administers the surveys. These people are supported by dozens of others who help design, package, mail, and collect the surveys and then analyze and report the results to your institution and the other participating institutions around the country.

Return to top

Appendix C Measurement Scales, Component Items, and Intercorrelation Tables (NSSE 2011 Data)

NSSE national survey of student engagement

Measurement Scales, Component Items, and Intercorrelation Tables (NSSE 2011 Data)

Scale	Variable	Description	Intercorrlation Table											
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practices														
Level of Academic Challenge	1 readasgn	Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings		.22	.37	.26	.14	.15	.13	.07	.13	.22	.11	
	2 writemor	Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more	.09		.43	.17	.11	.14	.14	.11	.16	.16	.09	
	3 writemid	Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages	.24	.31		.39	.15	.17	.16	.11	.14	.17	.08	
	4 writesml	Number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	.23	.05	.23		.10	.11	.10	.08	.06	.11	.03	
	5 analyze	Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components	.13	.03	.14	.11		.62	.51	.52	.27	.18	.24	
	6 synthesz	Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	.12	.06	.15	.09	.61		.58	.54	.31	.19	.22	
	7 evaluate	Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions	.10	.07	.14	.09	.49	.57		.53	.29	.13	.20	
	8 applying	Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	.08	.04	.10	.06	.51	.52	.52		.29	.15	.23	
	9 workhard	Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations	.10	.10	.14	.06	.28	.31	.29	.29		.26	.28	
	10 acadpr01	Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)	.22	.08	.16	.13	.18	.18	.12	.16	.24		.27	
	11 envschol	Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	.11	.04	.08	.04	.25	.23	.20	.25	.27	.27		
													Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.73; Senior=.76	
Active and Collaborative Learning	1 clquest	Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions		.31	.17	.13	.18	.16	.29					
	2 clpresen	Made a class presentation	.31		.35	.40	.15	.28	.17					
	3 classgrp	Worked with other students on projects during class	.18	.28		.39	.11	.22	.15					
	4 occgrp	Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class ass	.18	.28	.34		.24	.23	.18					
	5 tutor	Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	.19	.14	.15	.28		.27	.20					
	6 commproj	Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course	.15	.23	.18	.25	.31		.17					
	7 oocideas	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	.28	.17	.17	.23	.20	.15						
													Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.67; Senior=.67	

NOTE: FY correlations are in the bottom, shaded half of each matrix. Some items are used in more than one scale. Correlations are calculated after variables are converted to a 100-point scale.

This report is part of NSSE's Psychometric Portfolio, a framework for presenting our studies of the validity, reliability, and other indicators of quality of NSSE data, available online at nsse.iub.edu/links/psychometric_portfolio.

NSSE national survey of student engagement

Measurement Scales, Components Items, and Intercorrelation Tables (NSSE 2011 Data)

Scale	Variable	Description	Intercorriation Table											
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practices														
Level of Academic Challenge	1 readasgn	Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings		.22	.37	.26	.14	.15	.13	.07	.13	.22	.11	
	2 writemor	Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more	.09		.43	.17	.11	.14	.14	.11	.16	.16	.09	
	3 writemid	Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages	.24	.31		.39	.15	.17	.16	.11	.14	.17	.08	
	4 writesml	Number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	.23	.05	.23		.10	.11	.10	.08	.06	.11	.03	
	5 analyze	Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components	.13	.03	.14	.11		.62	.51	.52	.27	.18	.24	
	6 synthesz	Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	.12	.06	.15	.09	.61		.58	.54	.31	.19	.22	
	7 evaluate	Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions	.10	.07	.14	.09	.49	.57		.53	.29	.13	.20	
	8 applying	Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	.08	.04	.10	.06	.51	.52	.52		.29	.15	.23	
	9 workhard	Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations	.10	.10	.14	.06	.28	.31	.29	.29		.26	.28	
	10 acadpr01	Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)	.22	.08	.16	.13	.18	.18	.12	.16	.24		.27	
	11 envschol	Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	.11	.04	.08	.04	.25	.23	.20	.25	.27	.27		
													Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.73; Senior=.76	
Active and Collaborative Learning	1 clquest	Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions		.31	.17	.13	.18	.16	.29					
	2 clpresen	Made a class presentation	.31		.35	.40	.15	.28	.17					
	3 classgrp	Worked with other students on projects during class	.18	.28		.39	.11	.22	.15					
	4 occgrp	Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class ass	.18	.28	.34		.24	.23	.18					
	5 tutor	Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	.19	.14	.15	.28		.27	.20					
	6 commproj	Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course	.15	.23	.18	.25	.31		.17					
	7 oocideas	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	.28	.17	.17	.23	.20	.15						
													Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.67; Senior=.67	

NOTE: FY correlations are in the bottom, shaded half of each matrix. Some items are used in more than one scale. Correlations are calculated after variables are converted to a 100-point scale.

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Measurement Scales, Components Items, and Intercorrelation Tables (NSSE 2011 Data)

Scale	Variable	Description	Intercorrlation Table											
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Student-Faculty Interaction	1 facgrade	Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor		.44	.44	.33	.28	.11						
	2 facideas	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	.42		.54	.35	.45	.23						
	3 facplans	Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	.41	.47		.34	.45	.23						
	4 facfeed	Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance	.34	.32	.30		.26	.09						
	5 facother	Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	.28	.45	.37	.26		.33						
	6 resrch04	Work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements	.11	.18	.14	.09	.22							
													Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.71; Senior=.74	
Enriching Educational Experiences	1 diffstu2	Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values		.74	.24	.15	.18	.10	.15	.14	.12	.08	.10	.11
	2 divrstud	Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	.72		.26	.12	.18	.09	.13	.13	.11	.06	.08	.08
	3 envdivrs	Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	.24	.25		.07	.15	.04	.08	.13	.04	.02	.04	.05
	4 cocurr01	Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)	.13	.12	.08		.06	.17	.26	.17	.12	.13	.09	.14
	5 itacadem	Used an electronic medium (listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	.19	.18	.14	.07		.07	.07	.12	.01	.01	.04	.06
	6 intern04	Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	.07	.06	.04	.06	.06		.34	.24	.12	.13	.14	.25
	7 volntr04	Community service or volunteer work	.13	.12	.08	.21	.08	.15		.30	.21	.14	.12	.18
	8 lrncom04	Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together	.11	.10	.08	.10	.09	.14	.22		.11	.09	.12	.15
	9 forlng04	Foreign language coursework	.08	.08	.04	.07	.05	.07	.13	.08		.28	.13	.13
	10 stdabr04	Study abroad	.01	.02	.04	.03	.03	.14	.04	.08	.14		.17	.14
	11 indstd04	Independent study or self-designed major	.03	.04	.05	.03	.05	.16	.06	.11	.09	.32		.21
	12 snrx04	Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)	.05	.05	.05	.05	.06	.19	.08	.13	.10	.28	.30	
													Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.60; Senior=.66	

NOTE: FY correlations are in the bottom, shaded half of each matrix. Some items are used in more than one scale. Correlations are calculated after variables are converted to a 100-point scale

Measurement Scales, Component Items, and Intercorrelation Tables (NSSE 2011 Data)

Scale	Variable	Description	Intercorrelation Table											
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Supportive Campus Environment	1 envsocal	Providing the support you need to thrive socially		.48	.68	.31	.32	.32						
	2 envsuprt	Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically	.47		.47	.31	.48	.41						
	3 envnacad	Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	.69	.45		.24	.30	.32						
	4 envstu	Relationships with other students	.34	.27	.24		.46	.38						
	5 envfac	Relationships with faculty members	.29	.39	.27	.43		.54						
	6 envadm	Relationships with administrative personnel and offices	.31	.35	.29	.39	.62							
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.79; Senior=.80

Deep Learning Scale and Sub-Scales

Deep Learning	1 analyze	Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components		.62	.51	.53	.31	.25	.34	.25	.31	.24	.24	.29
	2 synthesz	Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	.61		.59	.54	.34	.30	.38	.30	.32	.26	.27	.31
	3 evaluate	Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions	.50	.57		.53	.32	.31	.33	.28	.29	.25	.26	.30
	4 applying	Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	.51	.52	.52		.28	.23	.35	.25	.28	.20	.21	.29
	5 integrat	Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	.29	.31	.30	.26		.44	.37	.25	.29	.22	.24	.26
	6 divclass	Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments	.28	.30	.31	.25	.43		.32	.27	.30	.28	.32	.30
	7 intideas	Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions	.33	.36	.33	.33	.34	.36		.34	.37	.28	.28	.31
	8 facideas	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	.22	.26	.26	.23	.22	.27	.34		.38	.27	.25	.28
	9 oocideas	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	.29	.29	.27	.28	.25	.29	.36	.32		.35	.35	.37
	10 ownview	Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	.27	.27	.28	.24	.22	.28	.31	.27	.35		.64	.51
	11 othrview	Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective	.27	.27	.28	.25	.22	.31	.30	.25	.35	.62		.57
	12 chngview	Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	.30	.32	.31	.31	.25	.29	.33	.26	.37	.51	.57	
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.85; Senior=.86

NOTE: FY correlations are in the bottom, shaded half of each matrix. Some items are used in more than one scale. Correlations are calculated after variables are converted to a 100-point scale

Measurement Scales, Components Items, and Intercorrelation Tables (NSSE 2011 Data)

Scale	Variable	Description	Intercorrlation Table											
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Higher-Order Learning	1 analyze	Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components		.62	.51	.53								
	2 synthesz	Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	.61		.59	.54								
	3 evaluate	Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions	.50	.57		.53								
	4 applying	Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	.51	.52	.52									
													Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.82; Senior=.83	
Integrative Learning	1 integrat	Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources		.44	.38	.25	.29							
	2 divclass	Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments	.43		.32	.27	.30							
	3 intideas	Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions	.34	.36		.34	.37							
	4 facideas	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	.22	.27	.34		.38							
	5 oocideas	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	.25	.29	.36	.32								
													Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.70; Senior=.72	
Reflective Learning	1 ownview	Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue		.64	.52									
	2 othrview	Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective	.62		.58									
	3 chngview	Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	.51	.57										
													Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.80; Senior=.80	
Campus Environment														
Environment Emphases	1 envschol	Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work		.38	.26	.27	.20	.20	.19					
	2 envsuprt	Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically	.46		.28	.50	.47	.48	.39					
	3 envcompt	Using computers in academic work	.28	.30		.24	.18	.23	.23					
	4 envdivrs	Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	.32	.50	.26		.51	.50	.38					
	5 envnacad	Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	.26	.45	.23	.53		.68	.38					
	6 envsocal	Providing the support you need to thrive socially	.27	.47	.27	.53	.69		.52					
	7 envevent	Attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.)	.27	.41	.26	.41	.40	.51						
													Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.81; Senior=.80	

NOTE: FY correlations are in the bottom, shaded half of each matrix. Some items are used in more than one scale. Correlations are calculated after variables are converted to a 100-point scale

Measurement Scales, Component Items, and Intercorrelation Tables (NSSE 2011 Data)

Scale	Variable	Description	Intercorrlation Table											
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Quality Campus Relationships	1 envstu	Relationships with other students		.46	.38									
	2 envfac	Relationships with faculty members	.43		.54									
	3 envadm	Relationships with administrative personnel and offices	.40	.62										
The Quality Campus Relationships scale is sometimes referred to as the Interpersonal Relationships scale.														
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.74; Senior=.72
Satisfaction														
Overall Satisfaction	1 entirexp	How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?		.68										
	2 samecoll	If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?	.61											
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.76; Senior=.81
Satisfaction plus Quality of Campus Relationships	1 entirexp	How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?		.68	.53	.38	.50	.43						
	2 samecoll	If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?	.61		.45	.35	.41	.39						
	3 advise	Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution?	.54	.42		.26	.43	.45						
	4 envstu	Relationships with other students	.39	.38	.28		.46	.38						
	5 envfac	Relationships with faculty members	.44	.33	.39	.43		.54						
	6 envadm	Relationships with administrative personnel and offices	.39	.33	.44	.39	.62							
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.82; Senior=.83
Student Self-Reported Gains														
Gains in Practical Competence	1 gnwork	Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills		.50	.42	.44	.48							
	2 gnothers	Working effectively with others	.49		.51	.47	.52							
	3 gncmpts	Using computing and information technology	.43	.53		.54	.43							
	4 gnquant	Analyzing quantitative problems	.46	.51	.56		.50							
	5 gnprobsv	Solving complex real-world problems	.46	.51	.43	.51								
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.83; Senior=.82

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Measurement Scales, Component Items, and Intercorrelation Tables (NSSE 2011 Data)

Scale	Variable	Description	Intercorrlation Table											
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Gains in General Education	1 gnwrite	Writing clearly and effectively		.72	.50	.62								
	2 gnspeak	Speaking clearly and effectively	.69		.46	.60								
	3 gngenled	Acquiring a broad general education	.49	.44		.48								
	4 gnanaly	Thinking critically and analytically	.62	.59	.51									
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.84; Senior=.84
Gains in Personal and Social Development	1 gnethics	Developing a personal code of values and ethics		.65	.59	.42	.52	.65	.53					
	2 gnself	Understanding yourself	.64		.61	.42	.64	.53	.46					
	3 gndivers	Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	.60	.61		.44	.47	.56	.46					
	4 gncitizn	Voting in local, state, or national elections	.37	.36	.39		.40	.47	.41					
	5 gninq	Learning effectively on your own	.53	.63	.48	.37		.44	.34					
	6 gncommun	Contributing to the welfare of your community	.61	.49	.53	.43	.43		.57					
	7 gnspirit	Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	.54	.46	.45	.38	.35	.56						
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.87; Senior=.88
Scalelets														
Course Challenge	1 workhard	Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations		.14	.32	.26	.28							
	2 clunprep*	Come to class without completing readings or assignments (*Reverse coded)	.13		.16	.15	.10							
	3 exams	To what extent have…your examinations during the current school year challenged you to do you best work?	.29	.12		.23	.30							
	4 acadpr01	Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)	.23	.15	.25		.27							
	5 envschol	Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	.27	.10	.30	.27								
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.57; Senior=.59

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Measurement Scales, Components Items, and Intercorrelation Tables (NSSE 2011 Data)

Scale	Variable	Description	Intercorrlation Table											
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Writing	1 rewropap	Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in		.41	.21	.17	.06							
	2 integrat	Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	.45		.19	.28	.17							
	3 writemor	Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more	.13	.09		.44	.17							
	4 writemid	Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages	.20	.26	.31		.40							
	5 writesml	Number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	.07	.16	.04	.23								
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.55; Senior=.63
Active-Learning Experiences	1 clquest	Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions		.31	.16									
	2 clpresen	Made a class presentation	.31		.28									
	3 commproj	Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course	.15	.23										
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.47; Senior=.50
Collaborative Learning Experience	1 classgrp	Worked with other students on projects during class		.39	.11	.15								
	2 occgrp	Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	.34		.24	.18								
	3 tutor	Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	.15	.28		.20								
	4 oocideas	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	.17	.23	.19									
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.54; Senior=.52
Course-Related Interactions with Faculty	1 facgrade	Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor		.44	.33									
	2 facideas	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	.42		.35									
	3 facfeed	Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance	.34	.31										
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.63; Senior=.64
Out-of-Class Interactions with Faculty	1 facplans	Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor		.45	.23									
	2 facother	Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	.37		.33									
	3 resrch04	Work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements	.14	.22										
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.49; Senior=.60

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Measurement Scales, Components Items, and Intercorrelation Tables (NSSE 2011 Data)

Scale	Variable	Description	Intercorrlation Table										
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Use of Information Technology	1 itacadem	Used an electronic medium (listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment		.35	.21									
	2 email	Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor	.31		.19									
	3 envcompt	Using computers in academic work	.21	.20										
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.49; Senior=.50
Support for Student Success	1 envsuprt	Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically		.47	.48									
	2 envnacad	Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	.45		.68									
	3 envsocal	Providing the support you need to thrive socially	.47	.69										
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.78; Senior=.78
Varied Educational Experiences	1 intern04	Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment		.34	.12	.13	.14	.25	.24	.17	.12			
	2 volntr04	Community service or volunteer work	.15		.21	.14	.12	.18	.30	.26	.17			
	3 forlng04	Foreign language coursework	.07	.13		.28	.13	.13	.11	.12	.14			
	4 stdabr04	Study abroad	.14	.04	.14		.17	.14	.09	.13	.11			
	5 indstd04	Independent study or self-designed major	.16	.06	.09	.32		.21	.12	.09	.07			
	6 snrx04	Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)	.19	.08	.10	.28	.30		.15	.14	.11			
	7 lrncom04	Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together	.14	.22	.08	.08	.11	.13		.17	.11			
	8 cocurr01	Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government,	.06	.21	.07	.03	.03	.05	.10		.21			
	9 envevent	Attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.)	.03	.13	.09	.01	.01	.03	.10	.18				
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.54; Senior=.64
Diversity	1 divrstud	Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own		.74	.26									
	2 diffstu2	Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	.72		.24									
	3 envdivrs	Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	.25	.24										
														Cronbach's alpha: First-year=.67; Senior=.68

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Appendix D: NSSE 2011 U.S. Response Rate Information by Key Institutional Characteristics

NSSE national survey of student engagement

NSSE 2011 U.S. Response Rate Information by Key Institutional Characteristics

		Number of Institutions	Overall Response Rate	First-year Response Rate	Senior Response Rate
Overall[a]		**668**	**33%**	**31%**	**37%**
NSSE Administration Mode	Paper	25	30%	26%	36%
	Web-only	568	34%	31%	37%
	Mixed mode	75	31%	28%	35%
Institutional Control	Public	276	26%	24%	29%
	Private	392	38%	35%	42%
Carnegie Classification[b]	Doc RU-VH	36	23%	22%	24%
	Doc RU-H	49	25%	24%	27%
	Doc DRU	34	26%	24%	30%
	Masters-L	165	29%	26%	32%
	Masters-M	72	33%	31%	36%
	Masters-S	37	32%	31%	34%
	Bac-AS	103	44%	41%	47%
	Bac-Diverse	127	36%	32%	42%
Barron's Selectivity Rating (Noncompetitive to Most Competitive)[c]	Noncompetitive	35	27%	23%	32%
	Less competitive	62	29%	26%	32%
	Competitive	285	32%	29%	36%
	Very Competitive	123	36%	33%	38%
	Highly Competitive	48	35%	34%	37%
	Most competitive	24	46%	47%	46%
Institutional Locale[d]	City	313	31%	29%	35%
	Suburb	140	34%	33%	37%
	Town	148	36%	33%	40%
	Rural	63	34%	30%	38%
Region[e]	New England	60	36%	34%	39%
	Mid East	121	33%	31%	35%
	Great Lakes	106	35%	33%	39%
	Plains	71	37%	34%	41%
	Southeast	175	32%	29%	36%
	Southwest	45	24%	22%	27%
	Rocky Mountains	25	35%	31%	39%
	Far West	59	33%	30%	36%
Total Undergraduate Enrollment	Up to 500	18	52%	50%	57%
	501 to 1000	61	43%	39%	48%
	1001 to 2000	161	39%	35%	44%
	2001 to 3000	114	35%	33%	38%
	3001 to 5000	93	31%	29%	34%
	5001 to 10000	97	26%	24%	29%
	10001 to 20000	77	25%	23%	27%
	More than 20000	47	23%	21%	25%
Full-time Student Percentage[f]	More than 90%	344	37%	34%	40%
	81% to 90%	160	29%	26%	32%
	61% to 80%	124	29%	26%	33%
	Up to 60%	39	34%	30%	37%
Female Student Percentage	90% and higher	19	53%	50%	55%
	71% to 90%	42	36%	32%	39%
	61% to 70%	170	33%	30%	36%
	51% to 60%	314	32%	29%	36%
	31% to 50%	108	31%	29%	36%
	Up to 30%	15	43%	44%	43%

a. First-year institutions N=663; Senior institutions N=668
b. "Other" Carnegie types were not included (45 institutions).
c. Ratings were not available for 91 institutions.
d. Locale was not available for four institutions.
e. Six institutions in "Outlying Areas" were not included.
f. Data were not available for one institution.

Vita

Ananda Newmark was born on October 1st, 1972, in Petaluma, California, and is a United States Citizen. He attended the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville and earned a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work and German in 1998. Following two years of professional practice, Dr. Newmark returned to graduate school at Virginia Commonwealth University where he graduated with his Masters of Social Work degree in 2002 from the Advanced Standing Program. Upon receiving his M.S.W., Dr. Newmark returned to professional practice before entering higher education at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in 2005 with the School of Social Work. Dr. Newmark has served as a Retention and Recruitment Coordinator and Academic Advisor until assuming VCU's Baccalaureate Social Work Program Director position in 2011. Dr. Newmark will continue to teach social work and engage in administrative and scholarly activities as associate professor in teaching at Virginia Commonwealth University-Richmond.